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GUARDIAN SHADOWS.

An Old Man's Soliloquy.

BY TOM GOULD.

All alone; how drear the feeling
As I pace the gloomy hall!
Ever near me, stealthily stealing,
Moves my shadow on the wall.

Now 'tis here, anon 'tis yonder,
Now advances on the right;
From me (I will not part asunder)
Everywhere it needs my sight.

Now it follows hard behind me,
As I near the swinging lamp,
Flits abreast, then darts before me,
Keeping time with silent tramp.

Till by feet its stature lengthened,
Stretches 'way along the floor!
Though by hundreds it were strengthened,
Part would linger as before.

Though that shadow, far extending,
Did some unknown limits greet,
Yet a part would still, low bending,
Crouch obedient at my feet.

Though this friend does not infuse me
With advice where'er I go,
Yet it never does mislead me,
As some other friends I know.

Ah, it points me back to childhood,
Where I first saw shadows fall,
O'er the fields, and through the wildwood,
And upon my chamber wall.

Memory by this shadow shaken,
Doth those early scenes recall;
Glances from the bedclothes taken,
At those shadows on the wall.

How I've lain and wished for morrow,
Haunted by those specters tall;
From them now no fear I borrow,
They are shadows, that is all.

Chasing them across the meadows,
As along to school I strayed;
Thus by day, those dreaded shadows,
Were a source of pleasure made.

Stern was he who scanned our faces
As we passed him in the hall,
Smiled we as took our places,
Smiled he rarely, if at all.

Furtively we eyed his truncheon,
Then with such a studious mien,
Watched the clock and wished for luncheon,
And oft snatched a bite unseen.

Hard board benches I remember,
Much too high above the floor;
Thumb-marked Colburn, torn and limber,
Told of tasks behind the door.

Through the western windows shining,
None too soon, each welcome ray
Fell athwart our desks, defining
Light and shadow as they lay.

Hands could never keep from etching
Faintest outlines round each ray;
We ne'er dreamed that we were sketching
Records of an idle day.

And when school-boy tasks were ended,
Lessons banished from the brain,
Through the lane our way we wended,
Chasing shadows home again.

Since then all their ways have wended
Up to brighter scenes than all—
Yet, one fingers, I'm reminded
By that shadow on the wall.

Last to leave—oh, fairest schoolmate!
Once a sweetheart, once a wife,
Gladly would I hail the mandate,
Seek with her eternal life.

Soon I too shall court the willow,
Drooping meekly to the ground;
May these guardian shades then pillow
Them, upon my grassy mound.

For in death they can not follow;
Left with earthly things alone,
May they pause awhile in sorrow,
Hovering round the silent stone.

Rocky Mountain Rob,

THE CALIFORNIA OUTLAW;
OR,
The Vigilantes of Humbug Bar.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.
AUTHOR OF THE "WOLF DEMON," "OVERLAND
KIT," "RED MAZEPPA," "ACE OF SPADES,"
"HEART OF FIRE," "WITCHES OF
NEW YORK," "A STRANGE
GIRL," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER IV. THE BELLE OF HUMBUG.

BESSIE SHOOK was a tall, fair-haired girl, with a round, good-natured-looking face, wherein shone a pair of clear blue eyes. She was the acknowledged belle of Humbug Bar. In fact, not a rival had she for fifty miles, north, south, east or west. A wholesome, buxom girl, quick in speech, and ready in reply. She attended to the hotel department of the Waterproof Saloon. Report stated that the blue-eyed Bessie had received an offer of marriage from every miner who had ever set foot in the Humbug Valley, and one and all she had laughed at, and made reply that they had better go back to their wives, whom they had abandoned—a reply which struck home five times out of ten, and made some grow red and others pale when the girl's answer brought back the memory of the days that were gone, and the joys—or sorrows which they had left behind them.

Bessie had never a favorite in all the Humbug region.

In the expressive language of the Pacific Slope, she said that "all the men were first-class frauds, and that she didn't take any stock in them."

Bessie was a great favorite, though, with all the frequenters of the Waterproof Saloon.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, on the same day that the events related in the preceding chapter took place. Bessie was sitting in the dining-room of the "Waterproof," an apartment rather limited in extent, but still quite big enough for the guests of Pop Shook, except, on great festive occasions. She was looking out of the window at a jumping-match, which was in progress before the hotel, and in which the

"Gay young rooster from the Geyser Springs," Johnny Bird, and Bob Shook took an active part.

The entrance of a guest disturbed the girl's meditation.

The guest was the man known as Jim York.

The girl greeted him with a smile as he sat down at one of the little tables.

"Get me something to eat, Bessie, will you?"

"Yes, what do you want, Jim?" she asked, rising to wait upon him.

"Oh, anything that you got in the house handy," he replied.

"Give you some ham and eggs?"

"That will do, and I'll come and look on while you cook 'em," he said.

The girl made a wry face. "Do you think that it will be interesting?"

"Yes, I s'pose so. I can tell then whether you will make a good wife or not, and p'haps I can recommend you to some likely fellow."

The girl tossed her head.

"The fellow had better get some one to recommend him to me," she said, laughing.

"You're just spoilt, Bessie," York said, quietly.

But the girl did not notice his manner. She proceeded at once to the kitchen, which was just off the dining-room, put the frying-pan on the fire, placed a slice of ham in it, and proceeded to break the eggs in a cup.

York stood leaning against the door-post, watching her intently.

The ham sizzled and sputtered as the heat of the fire began to affect it.

Bessie stood by the table watching it. She was conscious that York's eyes were fixed intently on her face.

Jim York had been a puzzle to the Belle of Humbug. He was about the only young and good-looking man who had come to the Bar since she had arrived there and become the mistress of the Waterproof Saloon, who had not fallen down and worshiped her almost at first sight.

York had not done so. For the first week after his arrival he had not seemed to even notice—even though he took his meals constantly at the Waterproof—that he was waited upon by a young and pretty girl, instead of the usual rough, half-grown boy or old battered-up veteran.

Bessie, spoiled beauty as she was, felt annoyed that there should be a man within reach of her smiles, who seemed so utterly indifferent to them. And, though rumor said that York's character was none of the best, and that he made more money at night by the aid of the painted pasteboards, known as "cards," than he did in the sunlight from the "pay-dirt" which his "strike" up the Wisdom yielded him, York stood high among the inhabitants of the Bar, and was reported to be worth more money than any man in the Humbug Valley, Doc Kidder alone excepted.

But he was far from possessing Kidder's popularity. He was cold-blooded and merciless. Woe to the man who sat down to a quiet game with York. Not till his last dollar was gone did he yield up his prey, and then there was no giving the loser a few dollars back, to get him out of town, and start him afresh on his road, to try another "luck" with fortune.

"Let him beg his way, the fool!" York would say, contemptuously, and light his cigar as coolly as though he had not brought a fellow-creature to ruin and despair.

Kidder was a different kind of man altogether. He was free and open-hearted, a favorite with all—men, women and children.

Little by little York's reserve had disappeared, until at last he and Bessie got to be quite friendly. He had not made love to her, though, and that part had not pleased the girl; not that she cared two straws about York, but that she was so accustomed to have every new-comer offer income at her shrine of beauty, that the young man's coldness fretted her.

But now, as York stood by the doorway, watching her with his cold, keen eyes, she felt that he was about to say more than he had ever said to her before.

She was nervous; she felt that her face was getting very red. At first she tried to persuade herself that it was the heat of the fire, or the smoke of the ham frying in the pan; but in her secret heart she knew that it was the cold eyes of the man fixed so intently upon her face, which sent the blood to her cheeks.

"Do you know, Bessie, that you are a very pretty girl?" York said, quietly.

"Do you think so?" And the girl busied herself over the fire, making quite a fuss over the pan that was getting along all right without her care.

"Yes, you're a regular first-chop of a girl, as a Chinaman would say, and I've come to the conclusion that I think a great deal of you."

"Do you like your ham well done?" the girl asked, suddenly, bending over the pan, and thus concealing her face from view.

"Well, yes, I think that I like it pretty well done," he answered, slowly and deliberately. He was making love with the same coolness with which he turned up a Jack from the bottom at eucher, or slipped a ten-spot into his boot, and took a "bower" from his sleeve in its place.

"The fire is very hot," the girl said, slowly, finding that he did not speak, and stealing a sly glance at him from under her long lashes.

"Yes, I judged so by your face," York rejoined.

The girl's face grew scarlet, and she drove the fork into the ham, and turned it over as if the fate of nations depended upon her action.

"Bessie, I'm lonely down in my shanty,"

he continued, "and I want to hire a good cook to come down and work for me."

"There's plenty of cooks—Chinamen," the girl replied, dishing up the ham and putting the eggs in its place.

"I don't want a 'John,'" he replied, "I want you; will you come? I'll give you a nice gold ring, and swear to take care of you all the rest of your life."

The girl's triumph had come at last. York was at her feet, but, strange to say, she did not enjoy her triumph. York was altogether too much in earnest. He was not like the other suitors, who had plumped down on their knees, and talked of revolvers and bowie-knives, if they were refused; and when the refusal came, afterward, comforted themselves by getting "howling" drunk, and kicking up the devil's own row, in a free fight outside the Waterproof Saloon.

York was no such man, and Bessie, all at once woke to the knowledge that he was not a man to be trifled with by any woman.

She had courted the man's attentions, tried to make him care for her, simply because he had seemed indifferent to her charms, and now that he was in the toils, she discovered, too late, that it would have been better for her if she had left him alone.

The question came, and the answer must be yes or no. Which should it be? She discovered that she did not like him well enough to say "yes," and she was afraid to say "no."

York was reputed to be a merciless enemy, one who neither forgot nor forgave—an uncertain friend and a terrible foe.

One course only was open to her. Evade the question.

"Oh! do you want your eggs turned over?" she asked, attempting to ignore the question that he had put so directly.

"Yes, turn them over," he said, cold as ever.

The eggs flopped over in the hot fat and sent a cloud of steam up into Bessie's eyes, causing her to retreat a step, and, as she did so, she felt York's arm around her waist and his hot breath upon her cheek.

CHAPTER V.
A PREDICTION.

TALBOT looked at the girl in wonder. Calmly she returned the gaze.

"You have come to test my power," she said, finding he did not speak.

Talbot had remained silent, evidently puzzled.

"Yes, partly that, and partly something else," he replied.

"I knew that you would come the moment that you heard that I was here," she said.

"You did?" There was a slight trace of astonishment in Talbot's voice.

"Yes; I was sure of it."

"I beg your pardon!" Talbot exclaimed, suddenly; "but will you permit me to ask you why you were sure that I would come to see you when I learned that you were here?"

"Because you are a gambler, and, like all who follow your evil trade, you are superstitious. You believe in luck; that it runs counter one hour, and in your favor the next. You have taken a dangerous task upon yourself, and you would learn from me whether you are to succeed or fail; whether you will take the desperate road-agent a helpless prisoner into Bamock, and there receive the thousand dollars blood-money offered for him, or whether you will fall by the bullet of the robber in some lonely canyon, with the vulture and the wolf as chief mourners by your side."

"My dear young lady, if you keep on in this strain, you'll speedily convince me that you are not a fortune-teller—that the gift of second sight has been denied you, and that, in reality, you are what an average American would call a first-class fraud," Talbot said, banteringly.

"Denial is easy," the girl replied, scornfully.

"So is assertion," he said, quickly; "but assertion is not proof. You tell me that I come to see you on a certain quest, and now I tell you that it is nothing of the sort; that you are utterly and thoroughly wrong."

"And you do not come for the purpose of learning whether you will succeed in winning your bet or not?"

"No."

"Why do you come?"

"If you can not tell that, your skill as a fortune-teller must be scant," he said, laughing.

"No," she replied, slowly, "that is beyond all earthly power, even though aided by the subtle influences of the spirit world. In the palm of your hand I can read the lines, which tell of your past life and predict the important events of the future. Gazing in the depths of my magic crystal, and aided by the mystic gift of looking into the future, which the seventh daughter gives to the seventh daughter, I can warn you of dangers to come, but can not tell you how to avoid them."

"Your information can not prove of much service, then," he said, dryly.

"Why not?" she demanded, quickly.

"Is the chart, which shows the location of the sunken reef beneath the wave, of no use to the mariner who holds the helm of the goodly ship? Will the knowledge of the quicksand not save the traveler from sinking into it? Why, then, will not the knowledge of the future be of use to you?"

"I will test your skill, at all events, since I am here," he said, gravely; "but, I assure you that I had another purpose in view when I came hither."

"And that purpose?" she asked, curiously.

"I beg your pardon!" Talbot exclaimed,



"Hello, sport, don't shoot!" cried the stranger, holding up both his hands to show that he was weaponless.



"That is for you to find out," he replied, with a baffling smile. "I will own, though, that you do possess some mystic power, for you penetrated my disguise in an instant; but, as you confess that you expected me, the is no so wonderful."

"You wish to try my power?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Give me your hand."

Talbot extended the small, white hand, his chiefest pride.

A convulsive shudder shook the frame of the girl as she took the cold, white hand within her own warm palms.

Talbot noticed her agitation and wondered at it.

The eyes of the girl sparkled with a strange lustre; her face was unnaturally white, and her bosom rose and fell as the quick breath came from between the white teeth.

"First, I will speak of the past," she said, slowly.

A cloud gathered for a moment on the face of the gambler, and a sad look came into his clear, blue eyes.

"My past life has been miserable enough," he said, coldly; "only a little bit of sunshine here and there."

"And all that sunshine came from a woman's eyes," she said, slowly, looking into the palm of the hand which she held within her own, but straight into his eyes.

Talbot did not reply.

Then the girl let her eyes rest upon the white palm. With her finger she traced a line toward the wrist.

"Two years ago, at Walla Walla, this hand was stained with blood," she said, slowly, and a strange, unnatural gleam came into her eyes. This little cross on the line of life tells of a bloody encounter which came near being fatal to you. Am I not right?"

"Yes," he answered, and again a puzzled look came upon his face. She noticed the look in an instant.

"You wonder at my knowledge," she said, quickly.

"No, I do not," he replied; "however skillful you may be at reading hands, it is very evident to me that you are not good at reading faces. I do not wonder that you should know of my being concerned in an affair two years ago. All Walla Walla knew of it, and I think that you were there at that time. That is what puzzles me. I know that I have seen your face, and yet I can not place you."

"You are wrong!" the girl said, decidedly; "you have never seen the woman who calls herself Colomba Merinee before."

"I'd bet my last chip on it, though!" he cried, decidedly.

"I have spoken of the past; now for the future."

With her finger she retraced the line on the palm.

"I see here another cross on the line of life, and the time, six days ago."

Talbot shook his head.

"I have not been in danger within that time."

"You are wrong!" she exclaimed, quickly; "a hidden danger threatened you. Had you remained a day longer in Bannock, you would never have left it. A foe is tracking you down to your death. His arm was raised to strike, but by your abrupt departure you evaded the blow."

"Lucky thing, wasn't it?" Talbot said, coolly.

"But, you will not always be so fortunate," she exclaimed, quickly.

"Oh, the foe is still upon my track?" he queried.

"Yes; you have but gained a respite, not a pardon. Here, but a short space further on, is another cross which breaks your life of life, and that bodes a sudden and violent death."

"At the hands of the road-agents probably," Talbot said, in his cool, easy way.

"No; you will never die by their hands."

"By the hand of this unknown foe, then?"

"Yes."

"Another question—if your art can tell so much—how have I injured this person who seeks my life?" he asked.

"Can not your own heart answer that question?"

Talbot shook his head.

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Perhaps your memory is bad," she said, quietly.

"Perhaps so, but I wouldn't advise you to bet on that, though, for you would most surely lose."

"Can you not remember some deed of blood—some life rudely snatched from the world by your merciless hand?" the girl demanded, sternly.

"No," Talbot replied, firmly; "no man ever fell by my hand except in a fair fight. Whatever my faults may be, no one can say with truth that I ever rushed hot-headed into a quarrel, or used a weapon until my own life was assailed. I don't think it is a sin for a man to protect himself."

A strange look was upon the face of the girl.

"And this comes from him," she muttered; "from the man who before many days have passed will have found peace and rest in the cold, quiet grave. He laughs at my warning and rushes blindly to his fate. Is it then his destiny to die as I have predicted?"

"Twice already he has escaped. The first time, because other hands threatened his life, and it is fated that he must die by one hand alone. And this is my fee!"

The lips of the girl curled, and she laughed low and mockingly; little touch of joy was there in that laugh.

Then she went to the wall and opened the shutter which served for a window.

Twenty feet from the shanty in its rear ran the river.

The moonbeams shining down upon the surface of the stream, decked it with countless lines of rippling light, while afar off the dark pines frowned down upon the rippling river like grim sentinels keeping watch and ward.

A moment the girl gazed at the wondrously beautiful scene, looked at the cold, white peaks, gaunt pines and shining river; the incense of the trees filling the air with their strange odor, then she held the gold-piece up in the air, clasped between her thumb and finger.

A single instant the dark eyes gazed upon the gold as the white fingers held it; then, it went whirling through the air and sunk beneath the surface of the stream. Torn from the golden sands, it sought again its home.

"And as that metal sinks beneath the wave, so do I bury every spark of pity for this man. No act of mine shall save him from the death he has deserved!" she cried.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LEATHER COORD.

Talbot proceeded down the street, retracing his steps to the Waterproof Saloon.

"Where have I met this girl?" he muttered, communing with himself as he walked along. "I am sure that she is no stranger to me; but for the life of me I can not remember when or where I have met her. This remembrance is more like a dream than reality. Her face is a peculiar one and once seen is not easily forgotten. She knows something of my past life too. It is not guess-work. She spoke of some hidden danger threatening me, but that may be only the usual cant of the fortune-telling trade." And Talbot's lip curled in contempt at the idea. Then a thought flashed through his mind and he came to a sudden halt.

"By Jove!" he cried. "I guess now what she was driving at. It is just about a year ago when that difficulty at Barrel Camp occurred. That young stranger gave me just a year of life, and then swore that he would hunt me down to my grave. But, from that time to this, I have neither seen nor heard of him, and had almost forgotten the entire affair. While I hunt the outlaw, Rocky Mountain Rob, I in turn may be hunted. That's the way of the world. I must keep my eyes about me; not that I really care particularly whether I live or die, as this world at present has very few charms for me, but I don't care that any one shall be able to boast that they got the better of me when I was 'heeled' and ready for the attack."

Talbot again strode onward with a firm step. As the thoughts of the threatened danger passed through his mind, involuntarily his hand had sought the handle of the revolver belted to his side, and concealed from view at the skirt of his coat.

Then suddenly, from above the knes of a small shanty, a man stepped forward into the moonlight as though meaning to dispute Talbot's passage.

Injun Dick halted instantly, and in a breath the moonlight flashed along the shining barrel of his leveled revolver.

"Hello, sport, don't shoot!" cried the stranger, holding up both his hands to show that he was weaponless.

The man was a stoutly-built fellow, dressed roughly in the usual miner's fashion, big boots, in which the coarse pantaloons were tucked, reaching above the knees at dirty red shirt and broad-brimmed felt hat pulled down over the eyes. A huge yellow beard covered the lower part of the man's face, and the shadow of the broad-brimmed hat hid the rest.

Talbot did not relax his guard in the least; the revolver, cocked and leveled still, threatened the stranger.

"Say, let up, old man," continued the fellow; "that thing may go off, first thing you know, and drill a hole right through this cuss."

Then the stranger took a step forward as if to advance, but halted suddenly; good cause he had, too, for staying his onward motion, for the revolver of Talbot had risen to the level of his breast, and in a second more the leaden ball would have plowed its way to his heart.

"Say, stranger, hold on your mule-team, darn your eyes! What the blazes do you want to draw a bead for on a fellow who don't want to get up any fuss with you?"

Just you keep your distance, my friend," Talbot replied, quietly. "I don't know what you want and I mean to find out before you get within arm's-length of me."

"I don't mean any harm," the stranger growled, sullenly.

"I don't say that you do," Talbot said, in his usual quiet way; "but I mean to understand what you do want before I let you get any closer to me."

"Why should you think that I mean any harm?" the stranger asked.

"Why do you jump into my path way from behind the shanty like a Jack-in-a-box?" Talbot demanded.

"I didn't know that there was anybody 'round," the bearded fellow replied, in an injured way.

"You lie!" Talbot said, promptly.

"What!" roared the stranger, and he made a motion as if to draw a weapon.

"Steady, or I'll let daylight right through you!" Talbot cried, quickly. "This trigger works easy and my finger is a pretty heavy one."

"Say, you take an unfair shake," the stranger said, slowly, and in the tone of a deeply injured man. "I ain't 'heeled' for a fight. If I had a we'pon I'd go for you lively now, you bet!"

"You're lying again," Talbot said, contemptuously; "I can see the butt of a pistol sticking out of your belt now. You are 'heeled' as well as I. I know that you mean mischief by the way you came out from behind that shanty. I've got the 'drop' on you now, and I don't intend to

give you any points in this game. Now you just turn your toes in the other direction or I'll put you in a condition to ride in the first coach of a first-class funeral to-morrow."

"Oh, you've got me, for sure," the threatened man said, sullenly, "and of course I've got to git."

Then a slight noise broke upon the stillness of the night.

Quick as thought, Talbot wheeled around; he guessed at once that danger threatened him from behind.

Too late the movement, for a lasso, thrown by a skillful hand, coiled down around his shoulders; the noose tightened, and Dick was hurled violently to the ground, his arms pinioned to his side as though held by iron bands.

A second more and three men sprang up on the fallen one, and took care of it myself—that you could not find out how to open it."

"Yes—I couldn't never get the darn thing open."

"But I did."

"You?"

"Yes; by a mere accident, I one day opened it. Here is what I saw—it contains the same now that it did then."

She held the open medallion-socket before him.

He saw in it a ringlet of hair, and a small piece of paper, with a scarce-legible name on it.

The name was: "WILBERT KEARN."

"O-ho!" thought he; "I see how 'tis: this 'ere was worn by Kearns' wife, an' it happened to be worn by the baby's neck, when Beula stole the baby and bro't it to me."

"You see, Dan? That name has been perplexing me for a long time—to-night more than ever since my visit to the young girl whose name it is."

"And that 'ere girl is your half sister."

"My half-sister?"

"Heh-hm!"

Then the giant repeated the story which he had heard from the lips of the quadroom. In a few moments she knew all.

"I didn't never try to make you b'lieve I was your father," said Dan, in conclusion, "an' I haven't bro't you up in a way 'at you was fitted for. But I alius did the best I c'd for you; an' you've got a heap o' money."

"We were always kind to me, Dan," she returned, rather absently, for her thoughts were far away just then; and she added: "So my true name is Olse Kearns. And this young girl, whose heart I am breaking, by taking Hugh from her, is my half-sister—of the same flesh and blood that I am."

Then a new, a strange train of reveries entered her mind. She was silent for a long time, and her companion did not interrupt her.

And the subject of that meditation was Zella.

After a moment she arose and went to one of the many raised cushions about her. Beneath the cushion was a drawer, and from the drawer she produced a small writing-desk.

"Dan,"—her voice sounded very unnatural—"do you know the residence of Cyrus Winfield, Lucas Place?"

"Kinner."

"Will you deliver a note there for me?" writing rapidly while speaking.

"Yes."

When she had finished, she folded the paper, and addressed the envelope to Hugh Winfield.

"There it is—please deliver it some time in the morning, to-morrow, and I'll be very grateful. Now leave me to myself. I want to be alone."

But Dan lingered, to mention the plan he and Jiggers had entered into, for the discomfiture of the villainous physician.

He then showed lide the two wills which he had in his pocket.

After gaining a knowledge of Omnorann's baseness, she read over the wills.

Then, before he divined her intention, she tore the forged instrument into a hundred pieces, and scattered them at her feet.

"This one I will keep," she said, slipping the genuine will into her bosom. "You say you will face this wretch to-morrow night?"

"That 'ere's the time. Me an' my new pal's a-goin' to give 'im a regular shakin'."

"I will accompany you. Come here for me. Hugh Winfield, too, shall see it all. Enough now. Leave me, Dan; I wish to be alone. Be sure that you deliver the note."

The giant withdrew.

Idle walked slowly to and fro, after he had gone, and she was meditating deeply.

"Would that I had never been born!" she murmured, while her bosom heaved, and the delicate nostrils dilated with quick, short respiration. "This is a bitter, bitter change in the bright hopes I had painted. I was very happy—now I am miserable. This poor girl?—my half-sister, too! I have seen how wildly she loves Hugh—ay, even before I dreamed that she was ought to me; my heart went out in pity, and I could have wept to see her suffering so. It will be hard for me to give him up!—oh! can I? But I am stronger than she is; she is dying for his love, while I—! it is not possible that I could survive the loss, and even joy at seeing them happy? And this in the very hour of my triumph. Oh! it is hard! After all, though, I am nobody, still. I am parentless; the world will never be warm toward me—me, the slandered exile! Yes, the sacrifice shall be made, be the cost what it may. And Olse Kearns can live out the aimless, companionless life that has been lide Wyn's!"

and mother were, you always answered that you did not know."

"And I spoke the truth—then."

"Ah! Then?"

He nodded.

"Perhaps," continued lide, "you have found out since. Now, let me tell you something," and she related what had transpired during her recent visit to Zella Kearns, concluding with:

"This name, 'Kearns,' has been before my eyes for years. But, as you always said, you could not give me any information of my father and mother, I never confided the fact to you. Do you see this little medallion?"

"Yes—you had that 'ere room' your neck when you was bro't to my shanty, 'bout seventeen years ago."

"So you have told me; and you told me, when I was old enough, to take care of it myself—that you could not find out how to open it."

"Yes—I couldn't never get the darn thing open."

"But I did."

"You?"

"Yes; by a mere accident, I one day opened it. Here is what I saw—it contains the same now that it did then."

She held the open medallion-socket before him.

He saw in it a ringlet of hair, and a small piece of paper, with a scarce-legible name on it.

The name was: "WILBERT KEARN."

"O-ho!" thought he; "I see how 'tis: this 'ere was worn by Kearns' wife, an' it happened to be worn by the baby's neck, when Beula stole the baby and bro't it to me."

"You see, Dan? That name has been perplexing me for a long time—to-night more than ever since my visit to the young girl whose name it is."

"And that 'ere girl is your half sister."

"My half-sister?"

"Heh-hm!"

Then the giant repeated the story which he had heard from the lips of the quadroom. In a few moments she knew all.

"I didn't never try to make you b'lieve I was your father," said Dan, in conclusion, "an' I haven't bro't you up in a way 'at you was fitted for. But I alius did the best I c'd for you; an' you've got a heap o' money."

"We were always kind to me, Dan," she returned, rather absently, for her thoughts were far away just then; and she added: "So my true name is Olse Kearns. And this young girl, whose heart I am breaking, by taking Hugh from her, is my half-sister—of the same flesh and blood that I am."

Then a new, a strange train of reveries entered her mind. She was silent for a long time, and her companion did not interrupt her.

And the subject of that meditation was Zella.

After a moment she arose and went to one of the many raised cushions about her. Beneath the cushion was a drawer, and from the drawer she produced a small writing-desk.

"Dan,"—her voice sounded very unnatural—"do you know the residence of Cyrus Winfield, Lucas Place?"

"Kinner."

"Will you deliver a note there for me?" writing rapidly while speaking.

"Yes."

When she had finished, she folded the paper, and addressed the envelope to Hugh Winfield.

"There it is—please deliver it some time in the morning, to-morrow, and I'll be very grateful. Now leave me to myself. I want to be alone."

But Dan lingered, to mention the plan he and Jiggers had entered into, for the discomfiture of the villainous physician.

He then showed lide the two wills which he had in his pocket.

After gaining a knowledge of Omnorann's baseness, she read over the wills.

Then, before he divined her intention, she tore the forged instrument into a hundred pieces, and scattered them at her feet.

"This one I will keep," she said, slipping the genuine will into her bosom. "You say you will face this wretch to-morrow night?"

"That 'ere's the time. Me an' my new pal's a-goin' to give 'im a regular shakin'."

"I will accompany you. Come here for me. Hugh Winfield, too, shall see it all. Enough now. Leave me, Dan; I wish to be alone. Be sure that you deliver the note."

The giant withdrew.

Idle walked slowly to and fro, after he had gone, and she was meditating deeply.

"Would that I had never been born!" she murmured, while her bosom heaved, and the delicate nostrils dilated with quick, short respiration. "This is a bitter, bitter change in the bright hopes I had painted. I was very happy—now I am miserable. This poor girl?—my half-sister, too! I have seen how wildly she loves Hugh—ay, even before I dreamed that she was ought to me; my heart went out in pity, and I could have wept to see her suffering so. It will be hard for me to give him up!—oh! can I? But I am stronger than she is; she is dying for his love, while I—! it is not possible that I could survive the loss, and even joy at seeing them happy? And this in the very hour of my triumph. Oh! it is hard! After all, though, I am nobody, still. I am parentless; the world will never be warm toward me—me, the slandered exile! Yes, the sacrifice shall be made, be the cost what it may. And Olse Kearns can live out the aimless, companionless life that has been lide Wyn's!"

and mother were, you always answered that you did not know."

"And I spoke the truth—then."

"Ah! Then?"

He nodded.

"Perhaps," continued lide, "you have found out since. Now, let me tell you something," and she related what had transpired during her recent visit to Zella Kearns, concluding with:

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And the subject of that meditation was Zella.

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"Dan,"—her voice sounded very unnatural—"do you know the residence of Cyrus Winfield, Lucas Place?"

"Kinner."

"Good master Doc—"

"You broke into my desk, did you? You robbed me, did you? Tell me where those papers are—quick! I say your prayers before you die! I'm going to cure your curiosity and thievery!"

"Oh, Lord!"

"Tell me where those papers are?"

"Indeed, indeed, I haven't got them!" wailed Jiggers, shivering and shaking, and watching in terror the upraised scapel, which threatened each moment to descend.

"Then, where are they?—you rascal!"

"I don't know, I vow!—indeed I don't!"

"You do!" Onnorann ground between his gritting teeth, while he reddened more and more, and the savage look grew darker.

"Good master Doctor!—they must have been stolen—"

"And by you!" broke in the husky, hissing voice. "You stole them! You shall die for it!—you rascal! I'll have your life now!"

Jiggers screamed in affright, and pleaded loud for mercy.

"Say your prayers. You've only a moment—ha! curses! Who's that?"

Tap! rap! rap! came a sharp summons at the door.

But Onnorann only grinned devilishly.

"Ha! ha!—I!" he laughed, with another grind of his teeth. "Let them knock till their knuckles break! The door is locked—and before they can get in you'll be dead, James Jiggers! You'll pry into my secrets, eh?—and rob me? Now then!"

Jiggers saw that his employer's anger had rendered him partially insane.

"He-l-p!" he shrieked, as the bright, razored steel ascended higher, and the physician ceased to be calculating his stroke.

Whiz! fell the scapel.

Jimmy parried the blow—then, with a superhuman effort, released himself and darted across the room.

"Help! Help!" rang again from his lips. Onnorann muttered an oath, and leaped after him.

Just then the door cracked from its hinges, and the giant form of Dan Cassar strode in.

The Doctor wheeled savagely on him.

"Maledictions of death upon you!—who are you?" he snarled.

"I'm Dan Cassar, an' the champion o' Cal Mandor! Drop that 'ere knife you ha!" The infuriated man launched himself upon this intruder.

But Dan caught his knife-hand in a grip of iron—then sent him reeling across the apartment.

Jiggers made a dash for the book-shelf, and his fingers were already on the papers and treasure, which his employer had secreted there the night before, when Onnorann aimed a blow at his heart.

Jiggers dropped the articles, and grappled.

No longer the servile drunkard, and strengthened by the presence of a powerful ally, he wound himself, snake-like, round his adversary, wrenched away the scapel—then the two went to the floor, rolling over and over.

"Jest 'let up,' 'bobhead!' Dan jerked them apart, and held Onnorann out at arm's length.

At that juncture, Hugh Winfield entered, and close behind him were Zella and Oise. The cornered villain stared in astonishment on the two last comers, and his brain began to whirl.

It dawned upon him that these actors were there for a significant purpose.

He had been robbed of valuable papers—evidences of his dark plotting—he had found the body of the dead quadron; the mulatto girl had made known to him all that happened on the day previous; and these things flashed through his mind, in connection with what he now saw, to force upon him the realization that his misdeeds were known, that retribution hovered in the atmosphere fast closing around him.

"Look a-here!" growled Dan. "You see them 'ere two gals? One's the daughter o' Wilbur Kearn, an' t'other's the daughter o' Cal Mandor!"

Scarcely had he uttered the last name, when they were startled by a cry—a quick cry, and one full of a wild joy.

The door of the adjoining apartment flew open, and Calvert Mandor bounded in among them.

"Zella! Zella! My child!" but he paused. Which was his child?

Great as was Dan Cassar's amazement at his unexpected appearance, he promptly pointed to Zella.

In a second she was folded to her father's breast.

Then the giant—still holding Onnorann—explained Oise's identity in a few words.

Mandor took both in his arms, while tears of joy streamed from his eyes.

"Devil Onnorann!" he cried. "You thought me dead! Twice you have sought my life; but Heaven has been kind in preserving me for this moment of triumph. When you cast me down that treacherous pit, I did not fall, but clung to the edge as only a man can who clings for his life! While you stood in the doorway, I drew myself in between the flooring; and, by diligence—spurred and strengthened by a hope to confront you, and visit the punishments of justice on you—I managed at last to reach the spring, and escape. The hour of your downfall has come!"

He was interrupted by a dire anathema from Onnorann's lips.

The physician saw that all was lost. With one mighty effort, he broke the giant's hold on his shoulder, and dashed toward the rear apartment.

On the brink of the open hole, he paused to curse them and hurl defiance in their teeth.

Then, ere a hand could grasp him, he leaped downward.

Search was made for Theophilus Onnorann; but he could not be found.

He reached the Biddle street sewer, by means of the long hole he had mentioned to Jiggers; and he either died in there, or eventually escaped, to be seen no more by those whose varied fates we have followed.

The body of the quadron was buried by Dan Cassar's attention; and that worthy renounced his former life of evil associations, to remain with those who were now united in happiness.

Oise and Zella had found a father to love and care for them.

Though Zella soon rejoiced in a double love—for Hugh Winfield calls her "wife"—and jealously guards the gem he was so near losing in the dark hours.

Oise is resigned, and her solace is the knowledge that she made a noble sacrifice and saved a sister's life. She never knew how near her past life came to being exposed to the world; for, when the detective

apprised Cyrus Winfield that Hilde Wyn was, beyond doubt, a party to the robbery, Oise's checkered history was known, and the officer was dismissed, with a heavy bribe to remain silent.

Cyrus Winfield did not sink under the pending crisis; why, the reader may easily divine.

Let us say for Jimmy Jiggers, that he has never tasted a drop of liquor since that night; and he and big Dan are inseparable companions.

THE END.

The Rock Rider:

OR,
THE SPIRIT OF THE SIERRA.
A TALE OF THE THREE PAGES.

BY FREDERICK WHITTAKER.
AUTHOR OF "THE RED KAHAR," "THE KNIGHT OF THE RUBIES," "DOUBLE-DEATH," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

AHSATA.

At the moment when Belcour and Blanche Davis left the ledge on which they had been riding in full view, and dashed into an unknown canon to escape from their pursuers, a light, graceful figure made its appearance among the upper peaks of the Sierra, where usually only the abasata roamed, and paused to overlook the strife in the valley below.

It was the same lonely and supernatural vision that the Indians worshipped as the Spirit of the Sierra.

There she stood in the midst of those wild solitudes, beautiful and ethereal as ever, but we who are men and women, and who, after all, undeniable flesh and blood, cast in a mold of uncommon beauty and vigor.

So might have looked the huntress Diana of distant ages, swift as the antelope, pure and white as the crescent moon that crowned her forehead, and so she looked, this bright, fairy-like being, who seemed to tread on air at times, so perilous was her path among the dark chasms.

She stood at the very brink of a precipice a thousand feet deep, at the entrance of the same tremendous gorge where Belcour had first seen her. For nearly a quarter of a mile it opened its way into the Sierra, a perfectly perpendicular chasm, with a black torrent, streaked with white foam, far, far below.

Her only footing was one of those stunted, ragged trees that grew here and there out of the sides of the precipice, and she stood there as fearlessly as if on level ground, looking down into the valley, herself unseen. Behind her was a narrow cleft in the rocks that seemed to open into some cave, for she had just emerged from it, and the foliage of the tree entirely concealed her slender figure from view at a distance.

She looked upon a scene of wild commotion in the valley. The Indians were engaged in a furious assault upon the camp of the feeble remnant of the soldiers, which was girt with a ring of horsemen galloping round at full speed, and firing volley after volley in among the wagons.

Turning her eyes to the Sierra, she could command a view of many of the gorges, and saw Belcour ride into one of them with his fair charge, while a strong party of Indians were galloping up a neighboring ravine to intercept them. The girl looked anxiously after them till both had disappeared, when she turned and vanished into the narrow cleft.

That cleft, instead of conducting to a cave, proved to be a short tunnel of nature's make, that pierced the ridge of rock, and emerged on the other side into a circular basin, once the crater of a volcano, in all likelihood. Now it had lost all the stern aspect of its origin, and had become a perfect paradise of beauty.

The southern side of this basin was quite low, admitting the sun into its inmost recesses, while walls of rock rose on the north to protect it from the icy blasts of winter. The character of its vegetation was quite as luxuriant as that of the valley, and wild vines, loaded with grapes, seemed to have been trained by human hands to cover the otherwise naked rocks. In the midst of this singular basin grazed a little flock of mountain sheep with curving horns, all quite tame, for bells were on their necks, and they seemed to be quite fearless of the approach of the girl.

A low building, a sort of hermitage of rough stone, stood in the midst of the basin, and seated on a bench by the door was a venerable old man, with long hair and beard, white as snow.

Like the girl, he was dressed in a garb of the wild sheep-skin, and he seemed to be hale and vigorous beyond his years. The girl addressed him in perfectly pure English, saying:

"Father Clement, there are strangers in distress in the mountains. The two girls that we saw the Indians take yesterday seem to have escaped, for the wretches are now pursuing one of them, and their course will soon bring them to the same place where I saw that youth the night before last. What shall we do?"

"What can we do," Ahsata?" said the old man, in a perplexed tone. "If the Indians chase them there, they are lost. They can not climb where we go, can they? They are not used to such exploits. Even I, who have passed these ten years here, fear to find the time coming when my foot will not be so firm, my eye so sure, as of yore, and I shall be compelled to remain here, while my daughter is compelled to hunt to maintain her poor old preceptor."

"She will do it cheerfully, Father Clement," said the girl, affectionately. "But we shall see many happy years first, my father. Your arm is as strong as ever, your eye as clear as of yore, is it not?"

"Better far," returned Father Clement. "Blessed be the day, my daughter, when we fled from the tents of wickedness to dwell in the mountains. We have found health and strength in the wild struggle for existence, such as I never had in all my life before. But these strangers, Ahsata, where are they?"

"They rode into the middle canon that leads into the cleft of the entaract," she answered. "There is another one, you know, that comes in higher up, and if the Indians strike on it, the poor fugitives will be hemmed in."

"Let us go there, then, and do what we can," said Father Clement, rising. "We may frighten off their pursuers, but remember that our own secret will be a secret no longer, if we admit the strangers to our home. Have you thought of that, Ahsata?"

"I have," said the girl, firmly, "and I

am resolved. We can not remain here forever, and I must see the world. Who knows, Father Clement? I may find my kindred there, the father and mother I have never seen since I was a baby."

The old man looked shrewdly at her.

"And some one else besides," he said, with a half-sigh. "You have not forgotten the handsome stranger, I see."

Ahsata blushed crimson, and turned away hastily.

"Come, let us go," she said. "You talk nonsense, Father Clement."

And she tripped rapidly away to the cleft through which she had entered the little basin, while the old man followed.

Through the cleft she listened, till she stood on the roots of the stunted tree, and then she stood still and listened.

The rattling of musketry in the valley grew less every moment, and peeping through the branches, she could see that the Indians were retiring from the vicinity of the camp, beaten back by the fire of the soldiers.

At the same moment a yell arose in the gorges of the mountains, and Ahsata exclaimed:

"I thought so. The Indians have caught sight of them."

Then she turned round, and detached from a branch above her, a cord.

This cord was thin, no thicker than a forefinger. It was composed of the transparent sinews of animals, marvelously strong, and yet almost invisible on the gray face of the rock. It was hung over the branch of the tree, with a stone fastened to the end of it by a hole bored through it.

The cord, as the girl strained upon it, proved to be fastened to another stunted tree, that projected out of the rock some sixty feet away from them, and a little above the level on which they stood.

Suddenly, with a bold spring, the girl leaped off into the empty air, still holding the cord. She swung downward over the dizzy void with the smooth, graceful motion of the pendulum, rose again far away, and alighted, like a bird, on a third tree, more than a hundred feet off. The mystery was explained. It was simply the application of the flying trapeze to the problem of crossing that void.

She turned round with a gay wave of the hand, standing alone on the perilous post in mid-air, and east off the rope, with its weight.

Smoothly and evenly it swung back to the hands of Father Clement, who stood waiting to receive it; and the old man prepared to essay the bold task in his turn. As he did so the girl grasped a second cord, which was stretched on still further, and again she descended, and rose again, in that graceful, easy-looking curve, which was yet so perilous, while the muscular form of her aged preceptor was swinging over the first gap.

The two seemed like swallows on the wing, so silent and gliding was the motion, and the second swing brought Ahsata to a pinnacle of rock overlooking the same black gulf into which she had disappeared when first seen by Belcour.

As she paused there, and sent the long cord swinging back to her companion, the sound of shots in the ravine beyond quickened her motions; and she swung across the dark chasm by a third cord, and stood on the same pinnacle of rock on which the conjuror had first seen her.

At that moment he burst in sight on his magnificent black horse, bearing the form of Blanche Davis in front of him, and coming at breakneck speed along the narrow ledge, toward the edge of the waterfall.

Ahsata shrunk back out of sight behind a rock, and saw him halt. He looked pale and desperate, for the clatter of horses' feet, and the other side into a circular basin, once the crater of a volcano, in all likelihood. Now it had lost all the stern aspect of its origin, and had become a perfect paradise of beauty.

The southern side of this basin was quite low, admitting the sun into its inmost recesses, while walls of rock rose on the north to protect it from the icy blasts of winter. The character of its vegetation was quite as luxuriant as that of the valley, and wild vines, loaded with grapes, seemed to have been trained by human hands to cover the otherwise naked rocks. In the midst of this singular basin grazed a little flock of mountain sheep with curving horns, all quite tame, for bells were on their necks, and they seemed to be quite fearless of the approach of the girl.

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"I have," said the girl, firmly, "and I

standing over him licking his face, and the Indians were all gone. He was alone in the gorge.

The Spirit of the Sierra had vanished, and with her had also vanished his fair charge Blanche Davis.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE OLD COLONEL.

At noon of the next day the steady tramp of a long column of horsemen echoed among the rocks in a broad gap of the Sierra leading from the Middle to the South Park, and still nearly a day's journey from the latter. The men who rode in that column were perfectly silent, the only sounds audible being the monotonous tramp of the horses, and the occasional clink of a saber scabbard against a spur.

There were several hundred men there, all well armed, and in the center of the column were four brass guns, bright and polished, with their dark, somber limbers and caissons, stern and grim-looking.

At the head of the detachment rode a stout, burly officer, with a short, gray beard, the silver leaves of a lieutenant-colonel on his shoulders. In other respects his dress was rude and somewhat slovenly, consisting of a blue sailor's shirt, common soldiers' trousers and light boots, long guttish of blacking, while his steeple-crowned hat was battered and dented.

He rode a splendid horse in a stiff fashion, his legs quite straight, in the extreme fork seat; but, such as he was, he looked a man to rely on in a heavy fight, safe and cautious to enter, but sticking like grim death when once there.

Such was Colonel Davis of the Eighth Cavalry, a man who had commanded brigades and divisions in hard service for thirty years before, and who now, like so many others of our noble soldiers, had quietly assumed his subordinate position in obedience to orders, as cheerfully as if he had never worn the shoulder-straps of a major-general.

By his side rode the two cousins, Somers and Buford, in earnest conversation with the colonel, who looked anxious and preoccupied, but as stern and commanding as ever. No one who saw his square, burly figure would have guessed that under that grim exterior was beating a heart torn with the keen anxieties of a father, who knew that his darlings were in the power of such implacable wretches as the Apaches.

And yet, for all that, the old colonel did not hurry the pace of the column. He rode steadily on at the slashing walk of the old troop horse, but never attempted to quicken the pace, which might distress the animals.

He knew that a long march was before them, and that it was essential that the horses should arrive as fresh as possible. So the rescue party rode steadily on toward the South Park.

Would they be in time?

Colonel Davis showed no fears, whatever he felt. He was talking to Buford on subjects apparently unconnected with their expedition.

"You see, major," he was saying, "I can not but think it is the same, from your description. Poor Beckford was just such a looking man, tall, thin and bony, with a face like an old bald eagle's. We used to call him Don Quixote in those days. He was a splendid officer, though, as brave as a lion, and full of enthusiasm for his profession. It was a terrible loss to us all when he went crazy."

"But what was the cause, General?" asked Buford, curiously. Colonel Davis was a brevet major-general, and according to the logical (f) custom of our army, was "General" in society, while only "colonel" on duty, which made his address a puzzle to the uninitiated.

"The same cause," answered the old colonel, gravely, "which has ruined so many happy homes on the frontier, the infernal wretches of Indians. The peace commissioners come here and pamper them up with high living, issue muskets and ammunition to them, nominally to hunt with, and the bounds use them on us when we are off our guard. Poor Beckford was one of those frank, generous fellows who detected cruelty, and always treated the Indians kindly. His wife and one child were at our post—I was his first lieutenant in those days, major—and Beckford persisted in having his quarters outside the stockade. He had a theory about putting confidence in the Indians, and certainly for a long time they seemed to deserve it. His wife was a perfect angel of goodness to the squallid wretches. Many a time I have seen her among their filthy lodges, nursing the sick, and carrying little delicacies cooked by her own hands to some squaw dying with the small-pox. The Indians all seemed to adore her, and she seemed to have a wonderful influence over them. But it was all a sham. One day Beckford and most of the garrison were out on a buffalo-hunt, and I was left in command, with only a dozen men. Well, sir, a band of Cheyennes, led by a wretch whom I saw Mrs. Beckford rescue from the jaws of death when he lay sick of the small-pox, burst in upon us, attacked the stockade, and put us to our utmost to defend ourselves. Mrs. Beckford and her little girl, only three years old, were caught outside the fort, and we saw the chief himself brain and scalp her, after—well, no matter—you know what devils they are. She was killed at last before our eyes, and the ruffians carried off the child. Beckford came back that night, and found his house in ashes, and his wife's body half-burned up."

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Somers, involuntarily.

"Well, sir, he dropped like a stone, and we thought he was dead," said the old colonel, in a low voice. "We brought him to at last, but he was quite stupid, and the doctor told us he had brain fever. We did the best we could for him, but he lay delirious three days. The third night, when his nurse, an old negro—his body-servant—was asleep, he disappeared from the fort, and wandered off into the prairie on a bitter cold night in his shirt. We did not discover it till he had been gone several hours, and the falling snow had completely hidden his tracks. We hunted him for three days, and lost two men, frozen to death no doubt, in the search, one of them the black nurse. Till you told me what you did, I believed him certainly dead, for I have never set eyes on him since that night."

"Did you never hear any thing of him from the Indians?" asked Buford.

"Never a word. If they knew, they kept the knowledge to themselves. If, as I suspect, this is he, his madness must have proved his salvation, and he must have reached the mountains alone and on foot,

nearly naked and suffering from fever as he was. But I can hardly believe it. It's thirteen years ago now, and it seems impossible, only no two men like Beckford ever lived."

They rode on, silently, musing over the strange story, till Colonel Davis abruptly inquired:

"What makes you think that the two girls were not killed?"

He spoke in a harsh, unusual tone, the only indication of the burning anxiety which he was so resolutely hiding, but his eye had a haggard, wild look in it, that told of the fears that had devoured him.

"The strange being, who called himself the Rock Rider, insisted that he saw them taken captive," said Somers. "It was he who proposed a rescue, and when we left him, he was about to enter the valley to attempt it."

"What could he do alone?" asked Colonel Davis, half-incredulous, half-hopeful.

"He seemed to be quite confident," said Buford. "He had with him a friend of ours, who is quite a skillful conjuror, and they both seemed to rely on their powers of frightening the Indians more than mere—"

"Boom!" came a distant gun among the mountains, interrupting their conversation, and the colonel started and listened anxiously.

"They are fighting again," he muttered. "We shall have to hurry up. The horses can stand it."

He turned round in his saddle, and shouted, in his deep, hoarse tones:

"Column trot! March!"

And away went the rescue party on the trail of the distant battle, just as the distant mutter of thunder echoed through the Sierra.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 145.)

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THE HOME IN THE DELL.

BY A. P. M., JR.

Deep in the dell,
Bedded in roses,
Peeping from under a curtain of bloom;
Pride of the dell—
There coyly reposes,
One little cottage—a rare jewel's home.
Cottage of pleasure,
Castle of bliss,
Holding a treasure
Sweet as a kiss—
Seeming a flower, containing a gem,
Like the cup of the rose with its dew diadem.

Breath of scent,
Tangled in sunbeams,
Birds that are caroling music of love;
Airs of content,
Greeting till one dreams
Of the perfumes in Rosetta's fair grove.
Bower of poesy,
Bosom of joy,
Gilded and rosy,
Free from alloy—
All a charmed picture of heavenly mold,
Like to those the soft visions of slumber unfold.

Who would not live
In an Edenic paradise,
And rather its rudeness of cities to dwell?
Who would not give—
Think of its bliss!
All be possessed, for that home in the dell?
When two fond eyes,
Beaming with love,
Vie in a happy
That mantle above;
Where ripe lips bid you a welcome and stay,
Like the glad flower welcomes the new life of day!

Uncle Phil.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

"So you don't like her, Uncle Phil? I must confess I am very, very sorry."

"Can't help that, Roy. You asked me the simple question, if I liked Miss Cora Winchester, and I answered, as simply, that I do not like her."

Uncle Phil Myrtleton slowly uncrossed his feet, and then recrossed them on the rail of the piazza, and Roy—handsome, saucy Roy, his uncle's especial admiration—sat staring out on the warm-tinted trees that wound in scarlet and yellow glory, around the foot of the hill.

"I wish I did, though, I declare I do, for your sake," he went on, in a kind, thoughtful way. "I know she's very pretty and accomplished, and all that sort of thing, but for my part, I couldn't give one of Angie Sefton's curls for Miss Winchester's—er tire set."

Uncle Phil evidently completed his remark a little differently from the way he originally intended, for a little quizzical smile lurked under his heavy gray mustache.

Roy's lips suddenly curled.

"Angie Sefton! Is it possible, Uncle Phil, you imagined I was at all interested in her?"

But there came a deepening of the bronze flush on Roy Myrtleton's handsome face, and as he found Uncle Phil in no ways inclined to take his keen blue eyes off his countenance, Roy looked away—over the tinted hill again.

For a moment Uncle Phil only watched his nephew's face; then, very gravely, he answered:

"Most assuredly I did think you were deeply interested in Angie—bless her sweet face! If you have not been in earnest, Roy, what have you been meaning by all the rides, and drives, and calls this summer, until Miss Winchester came, a fortnight ago? I tell you seriously, my boy, I am afraid Angie has been in earnest, if you haven't."

Roy threw away his cigar in one of his sudden bursts of impatience.

"And am I to blame if she misconstrued a flirtation for real love-making? I tell you, Uncle Phil, I want a far different style of wife than Angie Sefton would make."

"One like Miss Cora Winchester, for instance?" returned the elderly gentleman, dryly.

"Well—yes, since you seem determined I shall commit myself, although I am in the least ashamed to own I am in love with Cora Winchester."

Roy pushed back the rustic chair in which he was sitting, with a gesture more impatient than graceful, and Uncle Phil, as he watched the fine figure and noble head of the "boy" he loved so well, as Roy walked off toward Miss Winchester's boarding-house, gave a half-sigh of sympathy for pretty Angie Sefton.

"Pretty" Angie? Indeed, she was just one of the sweetest, prettiest girls for miles around, and now, contrary to ordinary rules of beauty, she was doubly charming, with her cheeks all tear-fushed, and her little scarlet mouth quivering. She had been dreaming such sweet dreams all the summer, and although when stylish Miss Winchester came to wind up her summer campaign at Mrs. Foxglove's boarding-house, and Roy Myrtleton and she struck up such a sudden, devoted friendship, Angie had vaguely wondered if a certain sort of awakening would not almost kill her, still never had the blow come until now—this very breezy October afternoon.

All of a sudden it had come, with a truthfulness from which there was no denial, with a cruelty from which there was no release; for, with her very own ears, that she loved the music of Roy Myrtleton's voice, she had heard what he said regarding her, to Uncle Phil.

There hadn't been much romance about it, either; but then, hard facts seldom are romantic. She had only been resting herself that afternoon, after baking some Charlotte de Russe for Roy's particular delectation, and through her open window that was just above the piazza where they sat, she had heard it all.

Something very like a death-pallor gathered around her mouth, at first, and she sat like one dazed. Then the tears rushed away from her heart, where it seemed they were curdling, and woman-like, she cried over her shattered idol—her love for Roy Myrtleton.

And then, an hour or so after, she bathed her eyes till their tear-traces had gone, donned fresh cuffs, collar and fluted white apron—and went down to the dining-room, to show Roy Myrtleton that she, too, preferred something in a "little different style" from himself.

"And Uncle Phil has the bad taste not to like her," thought Roy, as he looked very earnestly at the bright vision beaming upon him from the sofa in Mrs. Foxglove's parlor.

She had taken great pains with her toilet that day—Miss Cora Winchester, we mean—because she felt quite assured that Roy

Myrtleton would come. And he had come, fresh from the encounter with his uncle, who persisted in not liking this lovely girl, with her wavy hair that she arranged so gracefully and naturally, with her innocent, modest blue eyes that she turned on him so bewitchingly. Not like Cora Winchester! not admire that white-robed girl, all smiles and dimples! It was past Roy's comprehension, and he actually fell into a reverie on the subject, despite Miss Cora's presence.

"Oh, Mr. Myrtleton, I do believe you are thinking about that young girl I saw at your house the day I drove past. You are not a bit entertaining!"

She pouted and smiled at him in a way that quite bewildered him.

"Am I not entertaining? I assure you I was thinking of a young lady, but not my uncle's ward, by any means."

"No?" she returned, sweetly, and with the faintest blush possible.

"No," repeated Roy; "I was wondering whether Miss Cora Winchester cared as much for me as I do for her."

There, Roy had said it, and while saying it had walked across the room, and now stood before her, awaiting her answer.

"Oh, Mr. Myrtleton, this is so unexpected, so—"

"Never mind! Answer me, Cora, won't you? No, I will come this evening again, and give you time to consider it. But, Cora, remember what 'no' will be to me."

He stooped and just touched her forehead with his lips, and was gone from her presence before she was well aware of it. And then a curious smile gathered on her lips, as she slowly went to her room, took out her writing materials, and wrote a letter.

"Rex, will you mail this for me, please? I believe I can't reach the box."

It was Cora Winchester's voice that Roy Myrtleton heard, although he could not see her for the crowd in the post-office. "Rex" he saw; a tall, stylish fellow a stranger to him, but who evidently was very far from being a stranger to Cora.

Somehow, it grated unpleasantly on him when he heard the voice of this girl he loved calling this gentleman so familiarly; to be sure, it might have been a brother, or cousin, only that Cora had once mentioned the fact of her being brotherless, and almost cousinless—certainly there was no "Rex" among the few.

So Roy, naturally enough, while he and they two, and a dove, were waiting for the opening of the mail—I say Roy did just what you or I would have done—that is, took quite accurate notes of this Mr. "Rex," and then, because he discovered that "Rex" was remarkably handsome, forthwith felt exceedingly jealous, and began to wonder if Cora's answer would be "yes" when he went to her, an hour later.

Of a sudden, Cora's voice uttered a sentence that astounded him, and then—"I don't think he was at all to blame for it—he's stepped to catch every sound."

"He's to come at seven for his answer, Rex. Isn't it progressing finely?"

"Beyond your most sanguine hopes, it seems. But I must confess, Cora, to me the game is hardly worth the candle."

"Opinions differ," she laughingly returned. "When I think how Miss Sefton scorned you, I can do any thing to mortify him! Well, at any rate, I've won him away from her, and if—"

And just then there was a sudden rush for the window, and Roy quietly took his mail, and departed.

So he was the "game" was he, of pretty Miss Cora and handsome "Rex"? And this Rex—ah, now he recollected a certain suitor of Angie Sefton's who had annoyed her with his attentions, and of whom he—Roy—had been so fiercely jealous, until he found Angie barely tolerated him.

He gave a long breath of relief to think how he had escaped the mortification of a refusal from Miss Winchester; and, his wounded feelings overbalanced by his self-gratulation, he caught himself berating himself that he had neglected little Angie so long. Pretty little Angie—ah, what delightful times they used to have before—and Roy hesitated to even think Cora Winchester's name.

Well, he'd make it up with Angie; she was an affectionate little thing, and there would be no difficulty in making friends. Thank Heaven!—he was free of Miss W.

And so, by reason of that impulsive disposition of his that rebounded so easily, Roy Myrtleton went almost gayly home, building very pleasant castles, inhabited by himself and Angie Sefton.

Only, thought Roy, "I do wonder what Uncle Phil will say?"

And this is what Uncle Phil said, when he met Roy on the veranda.

"You're as welcome as the birds in May, my boy, for I was just wanting somebody to congratulate me, Angie! here, you surely are not going to desert me so soon?"

And Roy vaguely wondered at the blushes on her cheeks as he bowed.

"Show it to him, Angie—see, Roy, our engagement-ring! Oughtn't I be a happy dog? Don't you wish me joy—both of us?"

Dear old Uncle Phil! his splendid face all alight with the love that would lighten Angie Sefton's life as long as he lived.

Poor, poor Roy!

He stole a glance at Angie's sweet, blushing face, that bore no concern specially for him, and then, after well-wishes he was obliged to utter, went up to his room, so lonely and dejected, wondering if, after all, there were such things as happiness and love.

The False Widow:
OR,
FLORIEN REDESDALE'S FORTUNE.

BY MRS. JENNIE DAVIS BURTON,
AUTHOR OF "ADRIA, THE ADOPTED," "OCEIL'S DECEIT," "STRANGELY SEEN," "MADAME DUKAND'S PROGRESS," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XII.
NEW YEAR'S DAY.

ALL that New Year's Day a steady flow of callers streamed in and out at the Redesdale mansion.

The clear, bitter cold of the previous night had given over. The sky was full of rolling cloud-banks since early morning; they were mingling and spreading out their darker sheets to a monotonous gray, and a light fall of snow had begun.

Walter Lynne was one of the first to be ushered in after the bell began the tingling, announcing that the tide of callers was

fairly flowing. Somebody was engrossing Mrs. Redesdale, for which he was devoutly thankful. He was quite enough in love with his fiancée to be unreservedly devoted during the brief time allotted to a New Year's call.

"I came early to witness the effects of last night's unwelcome dissipation," said he. "Where are the traces? You were lovely as a night-blooming cereus then, and now you are fresh as an opening June rose."

"I am in the very springtime of my enjoyment, you know. Dissipation you call it, but I find it the very elixir of life."

"You'll be weary enough of it before the season is over—belle though you are bound to be. Oh, my rare blossom, I can almost wish that you were a little less perfect."

"I am madly jealous already. How can I endure to see all the moths of the metropolis hovering about my bright light. I shall play the tyrant, and rivet my fetters, I think."

"Placard me—Engaged?" No, indeed. Do be merciful, Walter, and don't clap an extinguisher on your bright light with its first glimmer."

"It is for you to be merciful, Florien. When shall I ask mamma? It will be necessary to get her consent as a matter of form, I suppose, though I warn you I'm not willing to recognize any authority unless it be in my favor."

"I don't want you to recognize any authority except mine, and that you must submit to unquestioningly. Don't turn Bluebeard at the outset, or I may conclude not to put my head in jeopardy. If I am to wear fetters, they must be flower-woven for a time—I'm not willing to be shackled by even golden ones just yet."

"And what does that mean, cruel girl?"

"Oh, that you mustn't hurry me—that you must not be too confident in asserting yourself my future lord and master. Who knows but I may throw off the bonds yet."

"Oh, to be free—
Free as the air that blows,
Free as the ocean flows—"

Be circumspect, Walter, or I may raise the cry—'Liberty or death!'

"It would be death to me to lose you. Ah, there comes some one to remind me that earthly happiness has a limit. And mamma is glancing this way uneasily, as though I had broken the proprieties by an over-stay. It can't be ten minutes, surely, Florien?"

"Considering the circumstances, I'll permit you to double the time. It is Mr. Arnold you see."

"What a bore! I'll sit him out to relieve you, Florien."

"Do you expect me to be grateful for that? I haven't pulled of any one's society yet."

"Thank you for saying it. I can face even mamma with boldness now."

Mamma was facing him by this time, as the new-comer paid his respects to her fair step-daughter.

"Pon honor, Miss Redesdale, you're blooming as a California peach. I thought I'd find you completely fagged out after last night's whirl. Why, I was played. Dreamed all night of being 'up in a balloon' all among the little stars and sailing round the moon; you know, till I got up, with my head spinning like a top. Fact, I assure you."

"Too much champagne," insinuated Walter.

"Now, that's unkind of you, Lynne. Think of exposing a fellow's weakness to an angel, like Miss Redesdale. You know better, though. Fact is, I believe I was intoxicated with bliss, Miss Redesdale. You smiled upon me, if you're kind enough to remember."

"And snubbed you because you couldn't waltz."

The young Californian looked rueful.

"You whirled me about so confoundingly—beg pardon!—ecstatically, that I wasn't over the dizziness six hours afterward. Found myself feverish, with a fluttering pulse and no appetite to speak of."

"Your case requires immediate attention, Mr. Arnold. Fluttering pulse, no appetite—clearly an affection of the heart. Should I prescribe? Ah, it snows—that is an inspiration. I suggest, instead of balls and late suppers, a cutter and a fast span, robes, blankets and hot bricks, and a dainty little feminine article stored away with the rest. I really believe we will have sleighing before night-time."

"Let me profit by your advice, whether Mr. Arnold does or not," Walter hastened to say. "Permit me, Miss Redesdale, to call for you at seven?"

"Well, by Jove! that is cool," ejaculated the willing party. "Before I could turn it neatly to ask Miss Redesdale to furnish her share of the prescription."

"If you gentlemen were so inconsiderate, it is time for me to interfere," Mrs. Redesdale smilingly interrupted. "After the fatigue of last night and the duties of to-day, Florien will not be fit to be out so soon. I can't permit her to fade her roses after the fashion of the young ladies of to-day. There, don't look so disappointed. If you be so minded and will promise not to stay late, you may both come in for an informal evening."

While she was speaking, a waiter drew near with a card on a little frosted salver. She put out her hand to take it, and read—

"WALTER LYNNE."

"Not your double, I hope, my dear sir?" she said, smiling at Florien's lover.

"Not exactly. A great uncle, or something of that sort, any number of times removed. An eccentric old coo, representing half a million, whom everybody humors. That is his plan of making calls, but he's apt to drop in on you quite unexpectedly any evening. It makes no difference if he has a previous acquaintance or not—he's sure to know something about your grandfather or some other misty antecedent you'd rather not have unearthed, and his oddities are always tolerated. I rather indulge in great expectations through him. That is his carriage."

Glancing out through the drawing-room window, they had a glimpse of the equipage—painted panels, gold-mounted harness, blooded horses, and an elderly colored coachman in plain dress upon the box.

Mr. Lynne, the younger, had succeeded in sitting out the San Franciscoan, the two gentlemen went away together as the bell jingled its warning, and as they went, passed the new arrival in the hall.

It was Aubrey Lessingham.

"I don't pretend to ask if I find you ladies well," he said. "The routine must be growing monotonous by this time, and who ever heard of any one not being well on New Year's Day? Refreshments? Thank you; cake only—no wine, Mrs. Redesdale."

It satisfied him, however, and he clasped

her hand with a pressure which made her wince.

"Sure of that, Mirette, I could go to the world's end at your bidding."

"If I went along, you wouldn't otherwise, you know."

"Perhaps," he laughed. "I think I shall cultivate a trust in you, though."

"Sensible man! It shall not be misplaced. But we have lost sight of the original subject. It's very inconvenient that Mr. Redesdale should have taken such a hurried departure from this 'vale of tears,' leaving me so ill-provided! Poor man! he was very fond of me, and meant to change his will, so now it is manifestly my duty to carry out that intention in effect. I don't suppose all my eloquence would convince the heiress that it is only proper she should divide equally with me, but if my son wins her and her portion, he will see that justice is done me. That is my plan as you know. But what do you think the wretched boy has done, colonel?"

"Not forestalled you by marrying already, I hope?"

He spoke carelessly, without any thought that he had hit the truth.

"Just what he has done."

He put up his hand to stroke his beard and stared at her.

"Lucifer! Why, then, that settles it. You can't very well commit a murder, or force him into bigamy."

She was watching him narrowly, and her half-formed purpose of confiding her whole wicked plan to him melted away. No man is so bad but there is some good left in him. A woman like her—thank heaven! there are few—with all the fierce malignity of hellish passion striving with her natural selfishness, can be devoid of every generous human feeling. She could not trust him with the full depth of her intended wickedness.

"I am not forced to the choice—quite. Fortunately for us he has the vices to which young men of the times are addicted. He lured the girl by means of a mock ceremony, but the weak-minded fool is enough infatuated to make it good any day. I want you to keep him here in town, while I get the girl—who really believes herself his wife—removed safely from his path. Once that is done we will have little trouble with him."

"Ah, that's sufficiently easy," responded Colonel Marquestone, with a breath of relief. "My conscience will sustain the breaking of a *liaison*."

Their conference was broken by the entrance of a servant to light up the rooms, and a little later Aubrey Lessingham returned. Florien floated down all in white, some fabric misty and intangible as a cloud, and dinner was announced.

They were back in the drawing-rooms, and Florien at the piano was playing softly, when Lynne and Arnold came in together.

These two rival lovers—scarcely yet acknowledged as such—had met at the door, each risking his neck in a frantic rush up the slippery steps to gain precedence at the bell-pull. It was the Californian's luck to be foremost, and such a peal as resounded through the house startled echoes in the furthest corners.

Both glowered upon Aubrey Lessingham, who retained his place by Florien's side, unmindful of their dark glances.

"Don't stir," he pleaded. "I have set my heart on a duet. Wish I'd known in time to bring Gerry round to share the honors with you."

Florien smiled, but before she could answer, the door opened again to admit Miss Lessingham and her friend, Cornelia Day.

"So kind of you to send your own carriage," said the former. "Indeed, I was delighted to come."

Gerry was sincere in that, for she had felt sure of meeting Walter Lynne.

"Trust to woman's foresight," said Aubrey. "What could you have done with three cavaliers?"

"Set a couple down to a game of backgammon," laughed Florien. "There's no lane so long but it has a turning, and so difficult so great but there is some way out of it."

"No?" questioned he, with mock solemnity. "By the way, Miss Redesdale, do you ever make flying leaps out of second-story windows nowadays? Because, if you do, I should like to be on hand as one of the principals in the scene."

He did remember then. Florien crimsoned, but could not be angry with the laughing good nature she saw in his eyes.

She struck a chord and sang a stanza of an absurd ditty.

"We went a-Maying, a-Maying, oh,
In the Mayday of our youth,
We spoke vows of fidelity
And everlasting truth.

He went a-wandering, a-wandering, oh,
Away from his native land,
He found another, later love,
And there bestowed his hand.

I was left pining, pining, oh,
Till another love came by,
I found another, truer love,
And happy now am I."

Her hands fell away from the keys, and she arose with a laugh, but as she glanced across at her accepted lover, her lips quivered with an after-sigh. Even to her eyes he appeared insipid after the glowing, boyish face at her side.

CHAPTER XIII.
A LITTLE CLOUD.

FLORIEN tripped down the stairs next morning just as the ornate and bronze clocks in the chambers were chiming eleven in unison. She was ready equipped for the promised sleigh-ride in seal-skin jacket and janney velvet hat, with trimmings of blue, and broad blue scarf muffling her throat and streaming back over her shoulders.

"How punctual," said Aubrey, meeting her in the hall. "You are actually the first young lady who never kept me waiting 'just five minutes' while she tied her bonnet strings."

"Oh, I couldn't think of wasting the precious moments of a precious hour. Quickly come, quickly go—is the way with the snow, I think. This soft air promises rain next."

As they passed down the steps, a fancy cutter, drawn by two milk-white steeds, was drawn up with a jerk at that side of the square, and Hugh Arnold leaned out from a pile of furred wrappings.

"Don't tell me I'm too late, Miss Redesdale. I was coming to take you by surprise."

"You have done so, Mr. Arnold. You're too good-natured by half to merit a disappointment, though I don't flatter myself it reaches that."

"It does, though—it's deuced hard on a fellow, I say. I scoured about for two blessed hours if I was a minute, finding the

right sort of a rig, and now I suppose I can just trot it back again without giving the thoroughbreds a warming up."

"That would be too great a pity. I would send you in to solicit mamma's company, but she was too late at breakfast and would keep you waiting an hour, I know. I hope you'll find some one, Mr. Arnold."

"Oh, no trouble about that," grumbled the disappointed swain, as he watched the fair lady of his choice helped in the other cutter. "Plenty of them, but not a Florry Redesdale in the lot. Bundles of nerves ready to screech at a two-inch jump—so deuced sweet on a fellow, too. That's a girl for you, now, don't go to toadying for the sake of your sawdust. Hang it all; why couldn't Lessingham stick to his biz—haven't heard of him being out banking-hours for a month. I wonder now if she's apt to be struck by that red mane of his. He's a jolly good covet—I'll say that—but blessed if I like him to cut ahead of me."

Sublimely unconscious of this muttered reflection, Aubrey tucked the tiger-swept over the as yet scarcely-broken surface of the square. At the first crossing they encountered Walter Lynne and Colonel Marquestone, arm-in-arm upon the sidewalk. Both gentlemen bowed, and Florry fancied that there was a shade of displeasure on her fiancé's face.

"Jealous, I verily believe," she thought.

"Wonder,"

It was not the first time Florry had wondered since New Year's Eve, but as now she had invariably crushed her misgivings without analyzing them. She was conscious of a vague feeling of disappointment, but whether it applied most probably to him or to herself, she was not prepared to assert.

"I suppose the sensation of delicious consciousness at loving and being loved, wears off with the novelty of the thing," she had thought. "People are apt to grow uncommonly tiresome, are observed, when they're once engaged. I didn't know before that the attribute applied individually to the happy actors in the play. I thought it was rather an affection observed by outsiders than acknowledged by those whom it might concern. Heigho!"

A dreary yawn had finished that reflection, and some other subject presenting itself to her mind, Florry brightened visibly in her mood.

Now Aubrey touched his whip to the flank of the leader, looking a shade graver than this.

"I don't like that Colonel Marquestone," said he, with a backward glance. "He has been among us for years, and he is still a mystery. I'm afraid that he's exerting some influence that's not for the best over Lynne."

Florry gave her shoulders a little contemptuous shrug.

"A man ought to be able to look out for himself, I should think."

"Which declares that you are a novice in the ways that are dark, Miss Redesdale. You don't know anything about the pitfalls which yawn under our unwary feet. Heaven forbid that I should prejudice you against my sex, but you mustn't trust us all too implicitly. A man may look like Apollo, and dance like an angel—provided angels do dance—and his heart be deceitful and desperately wicked, still."

"I'm to understand I can safely confide in only the old and ugly of your kind, I suppose. You're trying to warn me against that delightful Mr. Arnold, now, I know, but I'm going to shut my eyes to the truth of your aphorism. I couldn't think of imputing deceitful and desperately wicked sentiments to him."

"Nor need you," was Aubrey's laughing rejoinder. The young Californian was the last person to be included in the type he had given. "I'm happy to assure you, too, that Apollos and angels were never known to sport red hair and frock-coats."

He shook his leonine locks in mock-defiance at her arch glance. He was rather proud of his hair, despite his depreciation of it, and it was certainly rare as it was—beautiful I nearly wrote, but then people differed on that point. It was of the auburn tint which changes in different lights from rich chestnut to red flame-color; he wore it in a bizarre fashion, rather long and rolling in clustering curls from the forehead to the base of his neck. A very different type of mainly appearance from Walter Lynne, with his blonde locks cut close, his blue eyes, effeminate cast of feature, and complexion transparent as a dainty belle's. Aubrey was tall, broad-chested and sinewy, with a man's determination of character stamped on his rather boyish face, and reflected from his brown eyes.

"I'm to infer that your celestial acquaintances are extensive," suggested Florry, saucily. "How else am I to reconcile your intimate knowledge of the angels?"

"Who lives nowadays without knowing hosts of them? You remember the saying—'Speak of an angel and you hear the rush of his wings.' I believe in the rule of transposition, by which it might become—'Feel the presence of an angel and you are led to speak of them.' There, Miss Redesdale, that is the last nonsensical speech I mean to make you to-day. I give you credit for possessing a soul above trifles, and a taste above trashy sentimentalities."

Notwithstanding, Florry ran lightly up the steps on their return, and waited for her ring to be answered with the conviction that she had passed a very pleasant morning. A breath of chilly moisture swept her cheek as she waited there.

"Raining," she exclaimed, with an upward glance to the leaden sky. "No more sleighing for a time, then."

Raining it was, and the soft, steady down-pour swept away every trace of the snow in the city streets before nightfall. Florry stood by her window, looking ruefully out at the muddy patches which still lingered in sheltered places, when a tap at her door was followed by the entrance of her step-mother in dinner costume.

A heavy lusterless black silk this time, whose rustling folds would have stood alone. She wore a slender chain of gold, and a bracelet clasped upon the arm which was firm and white as polished ivory. Whatever she wore was becoming to her, yet her toilet had an appearance of severe simplicity which the richness of their details scarcely admitted—it must have been that she was one of those women who are born for gorgeous combinations—her style was so striking that it required a striking mode of dress to tone it down. She had a sprig of scarlet geranium in her hair—the only touch of color she had ventured upon yet was in her floral decorations. Mrs. Redesdale had her own ends to meet, by seeming inconsolable in her widowhood, and appeared, with Spartan fortitude, always in

the solid blacks which she heartily detested.

"Dreary," said she, with a little shiver, and a glance through the panes. "Come away, Florian; it will make you low-spirited."

"I like it sometimes," said Florian, turning away, nevertheless—"always when I have day-dreams at hand."

"Which mustn't be to-day, my dear. You've no time to indulge in them. It's full time you are dressing, as we have company at dinner."

"Oh, I thought we were to be alone to-day."

"Only Colonel Marquestone and Mr. Lynne."

If Mrs. Redesdale watched for a change in her stepdaughter's countenance, she was disappointed. No deeper flush tinged the fair cheek, no new light of interest brightened the hazel eyes. Only a little speculative shade crept into them at mention of Colonel Marquestone, remembering Aubrey's words.

"What is there strange about that colonel, mamma? He is different in some way from all the other people we meet. Every one seems civil to him on compulsion, as though he might chance to have the gift of the Evil Eye."

"And he has such fine eyes, too!" A hard glitter came into her own. What a sensitive nature was this to discover the difference. With a resentful thrill Mrs. Redesdale inwardly wondered what impression the delicate intuitive sense had taken of herself. "To the best of my knowledge, my dear, he is—Colonel Marquestone. That fact must account for any thing else you may discover in him. Everybody sees him, everybody tolerates him, and it would seem that nobody knows him."

Florian half-expected some explanation of his frequent presence at the house, but none was vouchsafed, and she turned to ring for her maid. Mrs. Redesdale put out her hands to interpose.

"In a moment, Florian. Mr. Lynne was here this morning to prefer a certain request—perhaps you can guess what it was."

Florian's eyes flashed, but she inclined her head and waited in silence.

"He wished my sanction of the engagement which he informs me exists, and to prevail upon you to make it public. To think of your being engaged, Florian, and I never to suspect it!"

"He did that?" cried Florry, with an angry intonation. "Mamma, I do not want my engagement made public. I thought Walter understood that from our conversation yesterday."

Mrs. Redesdale's eyelids drooped slightly as she answered.

"It was that I believe induced him to seek me. He wanted me to interpose my authority—influence. Of course I replied that your own wishes would be your guide; while I should be glad to be admitted to your confidence, I should never restrict you."

Very generous and disinterested without a doubt. But Florry's exclamation had given her the cue, and it tallied admirably with her wishes. She did not think proper to explain that Walter's confession had been drawn out by a skillful feint of her own—a little well-timed rillery—which led him to think his betrothed had confided the case to her stepmother, and she had not undeceived him. Her own observation had penetrated to the fact that he was Florian's fiancé.

"Very kind of you, mamma. Of course I meant to confide in you the first one, but was in no haste to let the fact be known. It is an old-standing engagement, entered upon before I went to school—did he tell you that?"

"No. I can not so readily excuse his dereliction now. It's like the impetuosity of a new lover rather than the open trust of one confident through long assurance. After winning he should be content to let you enjoy your first season without his ownership's taboo."

"I will settle that with Walter, mamma."

"I haven't a doubt of it," mentally commented mamma. There was never any thing like gushing affection brought to bear between these two women whom fate had thrown together. From the moment the elder lady first encountered Florian's clear eyes, she knew that flimsy pretenses would be quite too transparent for a blind. So she was content to sink even the patronizing authority, which would have been so becoming to her style, and leave the young lady apparently handling the reins of freedom in the most approved manner.

"One can whistle down the wind if one whistles long enough," had been Mrs. Redesdale's summing of conclusions. "And a willful girl's whims will wear themselves out if you give them time and space enough. To keep up a rebellion it is necessary to have opposition, and a little skillful agreeing is better than a whole stone wall to quash that."

"Don't let me keep you longer," she said, and with her own hand ring for the maid. "You're not quite rid of me yet, you see. So young and so fair, you aren't obliged to resort to the artifices of the toilette which women care to hide, so you'll not be offended if I preside. What are you going to wear, Florian?"

"I don't know. Just brush out my hair, Adele, and let it go at that. Something blue, I think. That is my color, you know."

"How unconcerned you are. Most girls of eighteen think of nothing but their dresses, but that's the advantage of not having to rely upon your make-up. You're sure to look charming in any thing."

"Yes," answered Florry, complacently. "Any thing suits me, I think."

A fresh dash of rain against the window-panes caused Mrs. Redesdale to glance that way with a little shiver.

"Horrid weather! who would have thought it yesterday?"

"Who, indeed?" Florry thought, with a tinge of regret of the merry sleigh-rides she had been planning for the week.

"I've had the best of them, though," she said, to herself, and then gave her tongue a sharp nip between her teeth as she remembered it had not been taken with Walter. Very loyal Florry was trying to prove herself in thought, and very remiss she found herself at times.

"And I promised to take a run down country to-morrow," Mrs. Redesdale resumed. "I do hope this down-pour will cease. I've heard of a small property upon the coast which is to be disposed of at forced sale, and it may prove a chance to get a quiet summer retreat very cheap. One thing, I will certainly see its worst points under such adverse circumstances."

"Surely you'll not go if the storm lasts?"

"My dear, I'm one of those preposterous-

ly healthy females that no sort of weather hurts. What a lovely shade that silk is, Florian. It will light up beautifully. The Mechlin laces and pearls with it by all means."

Mechlin laces and pearls it was, and very fair Florian looked in them as she stood under the drawing-room gasoliers, the pale blue silk "lighting" with ravishing effect. Walter, who was the first to come, met her with a new thrill of pride in his conscious possession.

"My star of the evening, you bewitch me anew with every new phase. In white you're angelic, in blue seraphic, in seal-skin and somebody else's cutter."

"Cutting," said Florry. "Reserve your comparisons, Walter. Do you know, sir, there is a crow to pluck between us before we smoothly sail again? My temper and patience are sorely discomposed."

"What is it, my angel?"

"Don't 'angel' me, sir; I'm in any thing but an angelic humor, I assure you. Didn't I especially remark no longer ago than yesterday, that I did not wish you to label me 'Engaged'—and here you are petitioning mamma to exert her authority over me to do that very thing. When I'm ready to submit to any authority, I'll very decorously go to the altar and give you the right to command, but you mustn't expect to tyrannize over me beforehand."

"My darling, what a mistake! I tyrannize! I beg the exertion of her authority."

"You know you did. And I'll not have it—do you hear? I'll not have it. I'm a grown young lady, with a will and a judgment of my own, not a wild little girl scampering over Jersey sands, climbing Jersey cliffs, and ready to be twisted about the finger of a Jersey summer stroller."

"What an outbreak! Florry dear, what have I done to deserve it?"

"What have you done? The very thing I forbade you doing. If I have to repeat it, you went to mamma—"

"Yes, you told me that, but it is one part of the delusion you labor under. I did not go to mamma—she came to me. It's true as I tell you, she badgered it out of me. I hadn't any idea but that you'd told her the whole affair—didn't know differently until now, upon my word. I did ask her to intercede for me in making it known, as much out of compliment as any thing else. It's rather hard to be lectured for being impatient to realize my bliss, I think."

"And I suppose if any of our dear friends of society, Miss Day or Miss Lessingham, for instance, or say Mr. Arnold and the club men, saw fit to interest themselves in our affairs, they would badger it out of you too. You would have to make some concessions to them by way of compliment, I daresay."

"My dear Florian, I wouldn't have vexed you so for the world."

"Vexed, Mr. Lynne? Angels and seraphs and the like never get vexed."

"Mr. Lynne—Miss Redesdale," reproachfully, "Angels and seraphs may not, but darling, impulsive little girls do with reason or without it. I beg your pardon most sincerely, Florry—will that do? I don't want you to make our engagement known; I'll just go and flirt with Miss Day and Miss Lessingham, and leave you to waltz with the Californian prince to your heart's content."

"You couldn't do better, my dear Walter."

"Ah, you can laugh, knowing that a nod from you still brings me to the relief. As if I could exist estranged from you, darling!"

And so the little cloud was swept from the lovers' sky, leaving all as serene as before. But siras show which way the wind blows, and unanimity of opinion was not to be a bond between the two. Walter, inclined to be jealous as he was, went over to devote himself to Mrs. Redesdale when Mr. Arnold dropped in during the evening.

"I had to have some consolation for the cut my expectations received this morning, Miss Redesdale. That's what it is to indulge great expectations, I suppose. I took your advice, though—got that little Miss Day to hear me company, and had my sleighride after all. Now, then, will you go to the opera with me this night week? Big guns to be on hand, divine songster, basso and orchestra, and all that sort of thing—hanged if I know head or tail of it. I don't care much for their screeching myself, but I know it's the proper thing for ladies to be fond of. I thought I'd be sure to speak in time."

An assurance that he would be honored by her company sent the young San Franciscan to the seventh heaven of blisses, from which he only descended to take a goodly share of the refreshments served, and to take a lingering leave when the other gentlemen departed.

"Insufferable puppy!" growled Walter, walking off in an opposite direction. "If Florry was any other sort of a girl I wouldn't have him dangle about her so. No fear of her giving me the go-by and snapping at him, considering his moneybags, as many a girl would. Give her a range, and let her think she's keeping the whip-hand of me, and she'll be true as steel. I wouldn't like to answer for it if she was hard pressed; these thoroughbreds sometimes take the bit in their teeth and run away with one's calculations. She'll come around docile as a lamb, tired out with gambling, if she'll let her own time and course. Deuced awkward, Marquestone coming close on me just now. He'll have to wait—that's all of it. No, my little bird, we'll not make our engagement public, but I'll just give the colonel a hint that I'm soon to step into fifteen thousand a year. To think how near I've been to committing myself for less before now! Lucky man, I declare I am. Most fellows in my fix marry old and ugly, cross-tempered and close-fisted, while I get the angel I adore, along with a very respectable fund. Such a prize! I'll not quarrel with Fate for her little punches, while I'm indebted for that."

And for a rainy Mr. Walter Lynne went straight on his way to his dingy boarding-house. He was not in the habit of seeking it often before daybreak began to streak the East; but he had been spending the evening with Florian, and though not given to weak sentimentality, he wanted to carry her fair face into his dreams that night undisturbed by the coarser associations a visit to his usual haunts would throw between.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 149.)

Petrusset, the lion-killer, a giant in form and strength, is one of the curiosities of Paris. He has a chamber carpeted with the skins of lions slain in Algeria, and gives *recherché* dinners therein. His gun can hardly be lifted by an ordinary man.

YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY.

BY LETTIE A. IRONS.

I had a sweet hope yesterday,
And life was joy to me—
The white-winged ships, like seagulls, sailed
Away across the sea.
The bright sun shone—the sweet birds sang
Amid the leafy bowers,
And everywhere the sycophants strayed
They met the blooming flowers.
To-day the flowers bud and bloom,
The sun shines bright and clear,
The seagulls, screaming, sweep the sea,
And bird-songs greet my ear.
The wild waves come, and break, and go—
The white ships sail away,
But the hope that blessed me yesterday,
Is dead forever to-day.

A Strange Girl!

A NEW ENGLAND LOVE STORY.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "THE WOLF DEMON," "OVERLAND KIT," "RED MAZZEPAN," "THE SPY," "HEART OF FIRE," "WITCHES OF NEW YORK," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE STORY OF HER LIFE.

A MOMENT Sinclair looked into the face, now flushed with passionate love, saw the humid eyes and the full lips, red as the carnation flower; then, with a long, lingering kiss, he claimed the loving woman as his own for all time to come.

"You love me?" he murmured.

"Yes—yes—as I have never loved any one else, as I shall never love again. I have struggled vainly against it, but it is more powerful than I, and I will not resist my fate. In spite of the guilt which will cling to the action, in spite of every thing in this world, whether we live or die, I am yours until eternity." Her arms were clasped around his neck, her head resting on his shoulder.

Little recked either that they had been drenched by the sea-wave almost to the skin, and that the wet clothing was clinging around them.

"You have something to tell me, have you not?" he asked.

"Yes; before I have always feared that you would despise and hate me when you knew of my past life; but now your kisses have told me that, no matter what I have done, your love will not falter."

"No," he believed that, he cried, fervently. "Then for the first time he took his eyes from the girl he held within his arms and looked around him. The night was coming on rapidly; already the gloom was descending upon the waters. Wood Island light, shining brightly some two miles to the south-west, showed how far they had drifted with the tide."

"I must see if I can rig a sail in some way, and then we can beat back into the harbor," he said.

He instructed Lydia how to manage the tiller, while he proceeded to clear away the wreck. Within half an hour he had, by aid of an oar, rigged a sail, and once more the Pearl was gliding over the water, beating up outside of Stratton's Islands.

"It will be dark long before we reach the shore, at this rate," he said, resuming his seat at her side. "The good folks of the twin cities would have plenty to talk about, but the prompt announcement of our engagement will be pretty apt to stop their mouths."

"Now, must I tell you all?" she asked, nestling down by his side.

"Give me your hand then; I shall feel more confident feeling the pressure of your touch."

He passed his arm around her waist and drew her up close to him.

"Go on; you are comfortable now?"

"Yes." Then she began her story. "I am a Virginian, born in the town of Staunton, in the mountains. My father was quite wealthy, and I was an only child. When the war broke out I was twelve years old. My father was called to Richmond and became one of the chief officers of the Government. When I was about fifteen years old, father introduced me into society, and I saw a great deal of company; mostly all were officers of the army stationed in Richmond or with Lee's army on the Potomac. One officer in particular, a colonel of a Georgia regiment, paid me a great deal of attention, but he was an ugly, brutal-looking man, and I really hated him. There was a young Englishman, too, one of the secretaries of my father's department, who professed a great attachment for me. I say he was an Englishman, for such he professed to be, but afterward I discovered that he was a renegade Northerner—an adventurer without principle or honor."

"A few days after my sixteenth birthday the colonel made me a formal offer. I refused him, and when he went to my father, he said that I was but a child and that five years hence would be time enough for him to be looking for a son-in-law."

"Then came the dark days of the rebellion; troops were hurried forward to the front, and reports came back of bloody conflicts and that the Yankee soldiers were coming nearer and nearer. My father, too, became involved in a quarrel with one of the Government officers higher in rank than himself. He never told me, but I think it was the President himself. Satisfied that the Southern cause was hopeless, he made preparations to fly to the North and then to Europe. I was left in charge of the secretary, and we were to go to New York as soon as we could get through the lines, and there join my father. He kissed me one night, bid me good-by, and I never saw him again."

"The secretary came to see me regularly every day, but said that he could neither gain any intelligence of my father nor arrive at any plan by which we could escape to the North."

"At last, just one week after my father went away, the secretary came one morning, said that he had heard from my father, and that we must leave for the North that night."

"When the night came, we set out. He took me to a house in a narrow street, where he said we would get disguises. But when we entered the house, I found that the Georgia colonel was there. I suspected on the instant that I had been deceived. Then the young man said that he had received instructions from my father that I was to marry the colonel, as he had been obliged to fly to Europe, and could no longer protect me. I knew that it was all a falsehood. The secretary had been bribed by the soldier to lure me into his power. But I was alone and helpless. A minister

came into the room, and, without paying any attention to my remonstrances, married me to Colonel Melledge. Then they left me to my despair, the colonel locking the door behind him, but saying that he would soon return. I was desperate. In my bosom I had concealed a little revolver which my father had given me, some time before. He had said that in war days even women sometimes needed weapons. He had also given me five hundred dollars in gold and greenbacks when he had left me. "I took the revolver from my bosom, and all the old Indian blood of the Randolphs of Roanoke—I am of that family—rose in my veins."

"When the colonel entered the room and attempted to take me in his arms, I shot him, just as if he had been been a wild beast. Then I fled into the open air. I turned from the narrow street into a broad one. The bells suddenly commenced to ring and the people came rushing through the street, exclaiming that the Yankee troops had entered the city. And so they had. Richmond had fallen! I never shall forget that night; the negroes seemed mad with joy."

"I made my way as soon as I could to New York, but I could not discover any traces of my father there. And one day as I was walking through the streets, I came face to face with the secretary who had sold me to Melledge. He told me that Melledge was in the city and had been in search of me. I implored him not to betray me. He consented on one condition, and that was that I should go with him. I consented, for I knew that the only way to escape from him was to deceive him. I gave him a false address and promised to wait for him at my house. The moment he left me, I walked on I know not where, until I found myself at a railroad depot. A train was just starting for Boston. I got on board and came to that city. I procured an obscure lodging, and gave a false name, and strove to hide myself from all the world. I got sewing to do, and so I lived a weary, aimless life, until this last winter I fell sick; it was a sort of a slow fever, and one day as I sat in my little room vainly trying to sew, the door opened and the secretary walked into the room. In a cold, cruel voice he told me that now he had found me, I must choose between him and my husband, who, he said, was in the city searching for me. Again I deceived him, and he, thinking that I was too sick to attempt to escape, left me for the purpose of calling a coach to take me away. But, weak as I was, I staggered into the street. It was just getting dark and snowing furiously. I did not go far; I had only one wish, to die, and so in a dark corner, I lay down in that snow-bank, hoping to find the rest that had been denied me."

"But you were saved?"

"Yes; that good old colored woman, aunt Dinah, dragged me from the snow and brought me down here, and here, for the first time since my father's disappearance, I have known what it is to be happy."

"And this secretary has not discovered you here?"

"Oh, yes he has; he calls himself Daisy Brick, now. But he has not threatened me as usual. He only demanded money, which I gave him, but he has not said a word about my husband."

"Your husband, you poor girl!" he said, compassionately. "Such a marriage as you have described amounts to nothing. This fellow has played upon your weakness. The chances are ten to one that the soldier is dead."

"And can you love me—a murderess?" she asked, fearfully.

"No, not that, but the brave girl who dared to protect her honor from a villain. Don't fear! All is bright in the future. The barriers between us are but the paper forts of the Chinese; a puff of wind and they are gone. And, as for this Daisy-Brick, leave him to me. I warrant that I'll find some way to get the truth out of the fellow."

The whitesquall was over, and peace had come at last.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

RESTITUTION.

Of course the gossips of the twin cities had not let their tongues remain idle when they heard how Sinclair Paxton and Lydia Gramme had sailed out into Saco Bay, at five o'clock, and had not returned until near ten, and they turned up their noses when they spoke of the accident which had befallen the boat.

"Oh, no!" they cried, significantly. "Sin Paxton's too good a sailor to be caught napping by a little capful of wind!" And so, for two whole days, poor Lydia's character suffered, but on the morning of the third day the scandalous allusions ceased, and wondering amazement set in when the newspapers announced that "Mr. Sinclair Paxton, our esteemed fellow-citizen, and Treasurer of the Y— Mills, would shortly be united in marriage with the young and accomplished Miss Lydia Gramme Dallas."

Daisy Brick read the announcement while waiting for his turn in the barber's shop, and the news interested him so greatly that he at once started out to interview the prospective bridegroom.

He found Paxton at his office in the mill. He opened fire at once. Daisy had calculated that Paxton would come down pretty heavily. In fact, he had made up his mind to "strike" him for a heavy "stake."

Briefly, and with graceful coolness, he "went for" his intended victim.

"You are about to marry Miss Gramme, or Miss Dallas, to speak more properly?" he said.

"What's that to you, sir?" Paxton said, sharply.

Daisy saw that it was necessary to strike a down blow.

"I have information, sir, which will probably prevent your marriage if I choose to make it public."

"You are Mr. Brick?"

"Yes, sir." Daisy was rather astonished at being known.

"Formerly secretary to Glyn Dallas of Virginia?"

"Yes—yes, sir." Daisy began to feel a little uncomfortable.

"Who assisted Colonel Melledge of Georgia in a most scandalous outrage, and by means of which the said colonel met his death?"

The ground had been cut from under the feet of the adventurer, and he couldn't utter a word.

Paxton saw at once that he had guessed the truth. He was quick to follow up his advantage.

"Now, sir, take my advice and get out of Biddeford. Confidence rascals of your stamp are not wanted in our community." Brick looked at Paxton blankly for a moment; then turned upon his heel and left the office.

The adventurer was seen no more in Biddeford.

It was on that very same afternoon that Nathan drove old Daddy Embden over to Deacon Paxton's.

"I want to see you on a little matter of business," the old man cried, as the deacon appeared at the front door, and Peleg got out quite nimbly.

"Come right in, Peleg," the deacon said. "What is it?"

The two sat down in the parlor.

"Wal, first an' foremost, it is true that your son, Sinclair, is going to marry that gal Liddy, as the paper says."

"Yes, I believe that the report is true."

"Kinder sudden, ain't it?"

"Well, no; there's been a little love affair going on for some time, I think."

"Delie says she's a putty nice gal."

"Yes; I've no objections to the match, although she is a poor girl."

"Who?"

"Why, this Miss Lydia," said the deacon, rather astonished at the question.

"She ain't poor!"

"No?"

"Got eighty-one thousand dollars, an' proper legal interest on that for seven years."

"The deuce you say!" exclaimed the deacon, betrayed into uttering an exclamation which savored more of the world than of the church.

"Fact, I've had the keef of her property ever since May, 1865. I've brought the documents all over with me, an' I want you to hold me to a proper account. There was jest eighty-one thousand dollars, an' then the regular legal interest since 1865."

"But how did this money come in your hands?" Paxton asked, in astonishment.

"Wal, it's a long story, deacon," the old man replied, in some little confusion. "But the short of it is that he daddy trusted it to me, an' then he got killed an' I didn't know where the gal was, an'—Wal, in course, it don't matter much. I've got the money an' I want you to hold me right down to a strictly proper account, with legal interest." Then the old man took a large bundle of papers from his pocket.

"There's the hull thing figured out. Delie did it, an' I guess she's got it all straight, but if it ain't, I'll make it straight."

"But, Peleg, I don't see that I've got any thing to do with this affair. I am not the girl's guardian, you know," the deacon said.

"But she's going to be your darter; so it's all in the family. Then, you know, deacon, she's a woman an' won't understand about business affairs. Now, you're a right smart business man, deacon, an' I want you to go over these papers an' hold me right down to the last cent, 'cos I may be an affixed rascal, deacon, an' try to swindle the gal."

"Whatever you may have done, Peleg, I guess that you're all right in the future," the deacon said, kindly.

"That's gospel, truth, deacon!" the old man said, solemnly. "I've heered in my time a sight of men who were powerful good at hollerin' for the gospel, but they ain't got it in their inward like you have. Say, deacon, I've got a question to put to you 'bout this money. You know I've had it a putty long time, an' I've r'ally made more than proper legal interest out of it, say about eight or ten thousand dollars over; who does that belong to? I ain't very young now, deacon, an' I can't go back an' begin over agin; then I got my darter, too, Delie; she's got the right religion, too; she 'rasted with me when I was weak. She ain't very strong, an' these pesky sewing-machines are enough to kill a jackass, let alone the women-folks."

"All over and above the eighty-one thousand dollars, and the legal interest thereof, belongs to you, Peleg; you can keep it with a clear conscience. The steward is worthy of his hire. But, in regard to the papers, come to-night, when Sinclair will be home, and we'll run over them together."

"Much obliged, deacon," and the old man rose to depart.

"Not at all; you are heartily welcome, Peleg."

"Say, deacon!" cried the old man, suddenly, pausing in the doorway, "didn't you tell me once that you didn't believe in ghosts?"

"Well, I don't remember whether I ever told you so or not, but I certainly do not believe in them," the deacon answered.

"You're right, deacon, by hooky; there ain't any such things."

Then Embden climbed into the buggy, and Nathan drove off.

As the buggy ascended the hill on the Biddeford side, Embden suddenly addressed the driver.

"Say, Nathan, do you remember the night when you drove me along here an' I thought I see'd a ghost?"

"Wal, I calculate I do," Nathan replied. "I thought you was goin' clean ravin' distracted."

"You didn't see any thing, did you?"

"No, I guess not; only a couple of the mill-girls a-talking down at the corner of the street."

"One on 'em had on a straw hat an' a waterproof cloak?"

"Yes."

"Miss Liddy, that's goin' to marry Sin Paxton?"

"Wal, now that you speak of it, I guess it was." Nathan couldn't understand what the old man was driving at.

"That's my ghost," and Embden chuckled in great glee. "I used to know her father; he's dead an' gone now, an' I had no idee that either kith nor kin of his was 'round these parts. He used to wear a little straw hat, jest like the one she wears, an' in the dark, with that cloak wrapped around her, she looked jest like him. Tell you what, Nathan, I don't believe in spirits nohow."

Holla's worse outright that he wouldn't stay in Biddeford to see the woman he loved married to the man he hated; so up to Boston he went, and in a drunken fit shipped for a three years' voyage in a whaler, bound for the South Pacific.

The wedding Sunday came at last, and two couples went into the church single and came out married. Delia Embden became Mrs. Gardner, and Lydia Dallis, Mrs. Sinclair Paxton.

As they came from the church, a sudden thought occurred to Sinclair.

"That ivory picture?" he said.

"My father's portrait," she replied; "I did all I could to shake your faith, but it was firm as the rock."

"And the Saco's curse?" the deacon asked, as they sat in the parlor after tea.

"Has passed away," Sinclair replied; "the Indian blood has come again into the family. Lydia is a descendant of Randolph of Roanoke; the blood of Pocahontas is in her veins."

Our story is told. A strange girl is transformed into a happy wife, and so we leave her.

THE END.

Cassandra's Portrait.

JENNIE DAVIS BURTON.

CASSANDRA strained her hands in a tight clasp, intense entreaty pictured on her face. She was dressed as she had been for the sitting, and her velvet robe—royal purple, with unbroken sweeping folds—a tiny snowdrift of priceless lace clasped at her throat, with a diamond cluster, and the priceless gems shimmering in the dusk of her matchless hair, all contrasted strangely with her attitude of humble pleading. The proud head drooped until the shadows half concealed the fluttering in and out of her cheeks, the mouth tremulous, the eyes downcast. No ordinary influence could thus have subdued Cassandra's usually imperious manner.

"Don't misjudge me, Mark. You know—You must know—that I have told you all the truth. You know how utterly impossible it is that I should be false to you."

The man at her side never stirred a feature, or spoke a word. He might have been a statue, for all the impression her asseverations produced upon him. She lifted her face now, and went on, passionately earnest.

"Is not my word enough, Mark? If it is not, you know how willing I am to prove my loyalty by deed, as well. I might blush to say it were I less assured of your love, but it has been your will, not mine, that has kept us asunder thus long. Your wish alone would persuade me to defy all opposition, and be proud to face those who are your enemies as your wife. Mark! Mark! can you hesitate to believe this?"

Mark Trevor turned his face a little more fully in the crimson glow that was already beginning to fade out of the western sky. He spoke without looking toward her, however; spoke bitterly, but with a decision that struck a hopeless conviction home to her heart.

"It's all over, with Cassandra! Your melodramatic powers can never revive the trust which I have lost. Were you so wholly mine as I believed, you could not have used your arts to bedazzle another man; you would not have played with a heart that which mine was held but a single degree higher, in that it was considered worthy to be retained. I don't pretend to remain utterly unscratched, but I am not a man to carry scars. Let me wish as happy a victory to you as I have won over myself."

His eyes were mocking her, and he held out his hand with the semblance of a smile upon his lips. She drew a little away, humble and pleading no longer. There was a white blaze of passion on her face, but she would not let him see the agony that wrung her very soul.

"At least let me justify myself, since you are not willing to accord me other than despicable motives. It was not my invitation that brought Lorraine here; it was merely to please my uncle that induced me to sit to him for my portrait. I have used no arts to win him, neither has he shown me any preference which could be construed into more than ordinary liking. You know in what manner I have run counter to my uncle's wishes hitherto; I believe that in throwing Lorraine and myself together he hoped to overrule my allegiance to you, and at last, consummate his scheme of seeing me united to his artist friend. The result will scarcely gratify him, since we remain mutually indifferent."

Trevor shrugged his shoulders, unconvinced.

"A Bohemian, and not a fortune-hunter? A dilettante in art, and not blinded by your radiance? A man of no means but refined tastes and expensive habits, does he hesitate to avail himself of this exceptional opportunity? Truly, there is yet a novelty left remaining under the sun."

Angry light flashed in Cassandra's eyes, but she could not bring a scornful retort to bear upon him. How weak a woman is while the man she has loved, or still loves, is not yet divested of all heroism in her sight.

"You might have spared me that implied reproach," she said. "I have humbled myself to you as I shall never do again to any man, yet I can not think that I was lightly won. My fault, if any, has been to believe too wholly in your protestations. As you say, it is all over now. You need never fear importunity from me again."

With that she left him. Trevor's eyes followed her with involuntary admiration.

"A magnificent creature, yet all right. Pity that one's tastes will change, for I was really sincere until—"

His half-muttered words died away in a smile that illumined his whole face, a tender, all-absorbent light that spoke more of love than tongue could utter. Alas, Cassandra!

He lit a cigar presently, and watched the wreaths of smoke curling up against the outer twilight. He was weaving the intangible essence into castles in the air that were ever changing their fairy-like proportions, but were ever tenanted by a figure with a lily face, and hair like dropping streams of molten sunshine. Alas, poor Cassandra!

When she left him, she carried her mingled anger and despair away from the probable intrusion of other presence. The house was full of nooks and crannies, which always promised seclusion, but this time she wanted more than mere solitude; she wanted scope to face her own passion, and beat it down by the force of sheer resistance. So she fled past darkening alcoves, and embowered herself in the fragrance from great vases of flowering plants set there, on up spacious stairways, and through broad halls to the deserted picture gallery, with its host of faces all belonging to past generations, peering gloomily down from their gloomier background of black wainscoting through the shadows gathered thickly there.

Her bitter agony died away, and after a time, a sense of peace—almost of hope—came upon her. She found herself bridging the gulf that had opened between them by fond fancies of Trevor's penitence, and her own gladly-accorded forgiveness. He had

proved himself hasty and ungenerous, but she could readily pardon, believing these qualities to have been provoked through too selfish love for her.

The daylight faded gradually out. The sky flung out its myriads of twinkling lights, and a crescent moon threw a weird white gleam on the world below. With her heart-storm quelled, Cassandra lingered by a window, finding pleasure in the serene beauty of the night.

All at once her heart throbbed with a fierce tumult. She held her breath, and crouching back in the deeper shadows, gazed eagerly down the dim length of the room.

Out of the gloom came two figures, pacing slowly, their footsteps making quiet echoes from the dust-covered floor. One was tall and dark and muscular, the other slight, with a lily-white face and a drooping shower of golden hair. The moonbeams touched them as they passed, and Cassandra read in Trevor's face—all alight with tender feeling—the truth of his sudden change toward herself. His vacillating nature had been taken captive by her uncle's penniless ward, Audrey Meer.

She stole away, not daring to trust herself to a second sight of his devotion to her rival. Within her own chamber she dropped all effort at self-control. Up and down the room she raged like some untamed animal of the wood, one moment weeping and moaning, and wringing her hands hopelessly together, the next breathing anathemas through her clenched teeth, and destroying, in a blind fury, any of the fragile ornaments within the room which chanced to come in her way. A hot-blooded creature, with good impulses turned into wrong channels by injudicious management; she was a strange compound of good and ill, capable yet of expanding into a noble nature, or resolving into a baneful incarnation.

She took no note of time as it passed, but at last, at a sudden turn, caught a pair of glittering black eyes fixed upon her. The eyes were set in a yellow face, framed in a narrow band of smooth hair, and a jaunty head-dress of ribbon and lace. It was her French maid Elise.

With an angry exclamation, Cassandra confronted her.

"How dare you come spying upon me? There, take that, and that; and if you're anxious for a dismissal without recommendation, try prying into my affairs again!"

With her hand she struck the woman a sharp blow on either cheek. The latter retreated a step, but said, quietly:

"Ma'm'selle will pardon, but dinner awaits! I come at monsieur's command, and rap, but there is no reply, therefore I make bold to enter. Will ma'm'selle be waited upon?"

"I was too impatient," admitted Cassandra. "Let this wife out the remembrance of my love-taps, Elise."

She tossed a coral bracelet from a glittering mass upon her toilet-table, and then put herself under the deft hands of the French woman. When Cassandra had gone, the latter weighed the bracelet upon her palm, and clasped it upon her yellow, skinny arm, viewing the effect admiringly, but all the while with a baleful light mingling with the greed in her glittering eyes.

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THE SEXTON'S DEVOTION.

BY JOE JOE, JR.

If little loved me,
If little loved me,
For her sake what could I not dare,
What great deeds could I do?
I'd leap from off the topmost Alp,
To please her slightest whim;
I'd jump into the middle sea,
Although I can not swim.
I'd wear my toes out at the heels,
My shoes without a string,
And wear my elbows out at the knees,
And think I was a king.
I'd walk all day upon my head,
And walk upon my ears,
I'd bid farewell to every eye,
And wipe my weeping fears.
And if she thought it an accom-
modation, I would fly
To cold Spitzbergen's ice-cream shore,
And stay there till I die.
I'd plunge into Mount Etna's fire
To make her think me brave,
I'd slide across Niagara falls,
Or swallow the Mammoth cave.
I wouldn't be afraid to meet
A starting catamount,
And wouldn't be set back a bit
To meet an old account.
Sore, so outrageously I love
The charming little elf,
That if I knew 'twould please her well,
I'd go and hang myself.

Just in Time.

A WOMAN'S ADVENTURE.

BY ELEN E. REXFORD.

THIS adventure of mine, about which I am going to tell you, happened in 18—, when East Tennessee was infested with outlaws, guerrillas and bushwhackers; my husband was in the army, and with my two children, I stayed in our little mountain home, and tried to keep things from going wholly to ruin.

It was in the latter part of October when this adventure befell me. The night had shut down gloomily. The sky was full of clouds, which now and then parted a little, and at such times the moon would shine out with a feeble glimmer that only seemed to make darkness still darker.

I drew down the curtains across the little windows, barred the door, and sat down beside the fire, feeling unusually lonesome. Neighbors we had none, as the nearest family lived some five or six miles off. About nine miles away was a small village called Carnsville, where we usually went to trade when we had any thing to trade with. Since the breaking out of the war, money had been very scarce, indeed, and we had to get along with what we could raise, mostly.

By and by Johnny, my youngest child, got sleepy, and I put him to bed. Willie got up and went into the back room or kitchen, and I was left alone.

Presently I heard steps coming up toward the door, and I got up and went to the window, and drew the curtain and looked out.

A man was coming to the house. I dropped the curtain, and debated with myself about what it was best for me to do. Should I admit him? I knew the country was full of bushwhackers and outlaws, and we of the mountains lived in constant fear of them. Dreadful stories of their cruelty had come to us.

There came a faint knock.
"Who are you?" I asked.
"A refugee," was the reply. "I am trying to hide from guerrillas. Let me in, for God's sake, and give me something to eat."

His story might be true, and it might not. But I could do nothing to keep him out if he should be a guerrilla and determined to enter, and if really a refugee, I had no desire to keep him out. So I unbarred the door, and let him in.

He was ragged and footsore, and had a pale, haggard face, and I could not help pity him, as he sunk down, beside the fire, in the chair I placed for him, and held out his chilled hands to the warmth.

I went out into the kitchen and got him a bowl of milk and some bread and cold meat. Willie was asleep on the floor beside the kitchen-fire, and I did not wake him.

While the poor refugee was eating, with an appetite that seemed half-famished, he told me how for weeks he had been skulking about among the mountains, dodging the guerrillas, and waiting a chance to make his escape into the Union lines.

"You must not go away further to-night," I said, when he had got done eating. "I will give you a bed in the garret, and your breakfast in the morning, and then you will be better prepared to go on your journey toward safety."

I made him a bed in the garret, and he climbed up the ladder, which served us in the stead of stairs. By my direction he drew up the ladder after him, and shut down a little trap-door, thus cutting off all means of communication from below, and effectually hiding his retreat. I did not anticipate any visitors, but there was a possibility of their coming at any time, and some who might come I did not care to have know of the refugee's presence under my roof.

I cleared away the traces of the poor fellow's supper, and sat down to mend Johnnie's coat.

Thump! thump! thump!
I sprang up in alarm. Some one was knocking at the door for admittance. I heard gruff voices outside, and presently some one demanded to know "If I was going to wait all day after I let him in?"

"Who are you?" I asked.
"That's nothin' to do with the case," answered a voice. "We want to come in, an' you'd better open this yer door, ef ye don't want it pounded down. That's what's the matter."

I hastily reasoned with myself that I could do nothing to keep them out, and so slid back the bar, and opened the door.

Two ruffianly-looking men entered. I knew at once that they were border outlaws.

"We want some supper—Bill an' I—I reckon. Step about lively, woman. We're most starved," said one of them to me.

"Seen any thing of a man skulkin' 'bout these yere diggin's lately?" asked the other.

"You are the first two men I have seen in a long time," I answered, evasively.

"Sit down, and I will get you something to eat."

"An' mind yer spry about it, too," said the first speaker. "We're goin' to stay with you to-night, an' we want suthin' to eat afore we go to bed, like any other gen-

tlemen, hey, Bill?" and they laughed over the feeble attempt at wit as I left the room and went into the kitchen.

Suddenly a plan flashed through my mind. Immediately in front of the door opening into this back room was a large opening through the floor, into the cellar below. A ladder led down from the room above. Why could I not remove this ladder, and manage to get them into the cellar?

There I should have them safe.

I hastily got some ham and sat it on the fire, where it was soon sizzling.

Then I opened the trap-door, and leaned it back against the wall. I laid a few thin, light strips of pine kindling across the opening in the floor, after carefully drawing up the ladder, and putting it out of sight. Then I spread a piece of old rag carpet over these strips, and no one would have suspected that the least weight on the carpet would cause what appeared to be solid floor to give way and open a yawning chasm into the depths below.

Then I woke up Willie, and told him what I was going to do. I stationed him behind the door, ready to fling the trap-door down to its place the moment the men went down through the hole in the floor—if my plan succeeded. If it did not succeed—I did not dare to think of that! It must succeed.

Then I hastily drew out an old table, cluttered some dishes about on it, and then, while my heart was beating like a triphammer, I opened the door between the rooms, and called them to supper.

They got up and came toward me. I knew I was deadly pale. I shivered as if with cold.

The foremost one stepped unsuspectingly upon the carpet, his companion close behind him. Down he sunk, immediately, and so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that he had no time to make an effort to save himself. The other one strove to avoid the danger, and clutched at the side of the aperture, but I stamped on his hands in a wild excitement, and he unloosed his hold and fell after his comrade to the bottom of the cellar. Willie dropped the door, and they were prisoners. I could hear them cursing me, but I didn't care for that.

"Willie," I said, "do you think you can take Dobbin and go to Carnsville?"

"Of course I can," he said, bravely.
"Then go," I said. "Ride fast, for life may be at stake. Get help. Go to Mr. Plofield's, and tell him of our danger. Have him send some one back with you immediately."

Five minutes after I heard him ride away.

I was joined by the poor refugee, who had been listening to what was going on below, half frightened to death at the danger he had got me into, if he should happen to be discovered. It would be death to him, or something worse, he knew, but he cared less for that than for the consequences of my concealing and sheltering him, which would be visited on me, were the ruffians to get us in their power.

"Go!" I cried. "Don't stay a minute. You can get away from danger before they can get out. There is a wall of earth five or six feet deep between them and freedom."

I will not leave you," he said, firmly. "After your kindness to me, I will not desert you in this time of peril."

And I could not make him alter his determination.

The cellar was in the middle of the kitchen and front room, and was much smaller than the house. Between the top of the cellar and the floor it was filled in for five or six feet all about the edge of it with stones and dirt. The only way for the men to get out was by digging through this embankment, and I knew that they could not dig very rapidly in the hard clay and among the stones.

Pretty soon I heard a stone fall into the cellar-bottom, and I knew that they had commenced their work of digging themselves into freedom.

How slowly the clock ticked; the hands hardly seemed to move. It would be three or four hours before Willie would be back. If we could only keep them until help came.

Eleven, and twelve, and one struck, and we could hear the stones fall into the bottom of the cellar. If they had nothing but their hands to dig with, I knew they could make slow progress, but they might succeed in getting out before assistance came, after all.

It was a long and lonesome vigil—that of the refugee's and mine. It seemed longer than any week ever did to me before.

The hands of the clock were wearing toward two.

Suddenly my companion started, and a cry escaped his lips.

I looked toward him. He pointed to the window. I looked that way, and saw two devilish faces peering in at us, with fiendish triumph and delight in their brutal features.

My God! The ruffians had escaped from the cellar, and what would become of us?

"So you hain't seen any men 'round lately, hey? Yer a cute 'un, old lady; but I reckon we'll put a stop to yer comin' any more o' yer tricks on us," cried Bill, as they came in. "This yer's the very sneak we've been huntin' for, an' the old lady had him hid away summers. I reckon. Durned if we don't pay you back in a right smart sort o' way, old woman, for yer trick on us. Hand down that rope, Bill."

Bill took down a clothes-line from a nail, and handed it to his companion. I was speechless, paralyzed, at the awful danger before me.

"We'll hang up the old lady to dry on her own clothes-line," laughed Bill, as he adjusted the rope over a beam. "Then we'll tend to the other customer. I swear, if he ain't goin' to faint!" he added, as the poor, weak, frightened man turned ghastly white, and sunk down, insensible, on the floor. I did not wonder at it, in the least. His sufferings had worn him all out, and he was weak as any child.

He put the rope around my neck, and all the time I was motionless, as if frozen with terror. Then, as Bill ordered the other to "pull up on her," a merciful unconsciousness came to me.

When I came to myself, a familiar voice was calling my name.

"John!" I cried. "Is it you? Are we both dead?"

"No, not dead," answered my husband.

"You came pretty near being dead, though."

Then they told me all about it. Willie had found a regiment of infantry in Carnsville. His father's regiment, as it happened, and some men had been sent to our assistance, under John's charge. They had reached there just as the ruffians were drawing up the rope to hang me.

"And they—"
"Have been taken to Carnsville, where they will be tried," answered John. "Tomorrow you shall be taken to a place where you can live in safety." And the next day we left our mountain home, and the refugee accompanied us. Safety had come to him when he expected death.

Forecastle Yarns.

BY C. D. CLARK.

RUNNING THE GANTLET.

We were coming down from the fishing-grounds, a little late in the season, full to the hatches with prime oil. The fishing had been good in the Arctic, and the captain would not come while the fish were so plenty, although he knew the danger of staying too long in the northern seas; and the sailors, proverbially careless of danger, only thought that each fish towed alongside added to the value of their "lay." The sea was beginning to show signs of coming danger, and was full of floating blocks of ice and floes, but as yet not enough to give serious cause for apprehension. There was always danger at sea, and especially in the whale-fishery; that we well knew, but that we were in immediate danger, no one would believe. We had a good ship and kind officers, who always took their share in any danger, cheerfully and bravely, as officers should. If it had been otherwise, the men would have been clamorous, long before, for them to take the ship out of those seas. They would have smelled danger then, only too quickly.

We were full now, however, and were to sail early next day for the South Pacific, there to winter. The men were crowding over the pleasant days they were to spend among the delightfully immortal inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, and thinking of the quantity of *Poe* they would stow away when once at Tahiti. But their dreams were broken that night by a call to the deck, and an order to make sail at once. They understood the danger now; the wind had shifted, and was blowing quite strongly from the south-west. All those floating fragments, which had been passing them for many days would be driven back upon them, crowding them in upon that desolate coast; and if that was not it meant, at the least, a winter of terrible toil and danger in those icy seas.

It was a beautiful clear night, such as we see only in the frigid zone. The pale moon beamed full upon the turrets and pinnacles of towering icebergs, already bearing down upon us in majestic beauty for our destruction. "A dozen were in sight, all tending toward the coast, and threatening us in their dumb strength. We must get out of this, we must clear the Cape, forty miles distant, or we were doomed. Every man was on deck and at his station, for we knew that it needed quick hands and willing hearts to save us now, and to avoid the 'bergs in our path. Two of the best men were at the wheel, and the first mate, a stanch old whaler, coned the ship and gave orders. Again and again we seemed about to foul one of these ice-mountains; but, as the prompt order of the mate carried us out of danger, and the white mass passed us by on its way to the coast. It was a magnificent sight, but full of peril, for we knew that many a ship had been crushed by the sudden overturning of one of these floating hills.

"Tw'll be touch and go if we clear the Cape," I heard the captain whisper to the second mate. "The ice is coming in fast, now, and if the floe gets ahead of us, it will be all we can do to save the ship."

"Can't we carry a little more sail, captain?" said the mate, uneasily.

"It won't do now. We are carrying all we dare in this sea, for it is hard to avoid the 'bergs, as it is."

"Hard a-starboard!" yelled the first mate.

The prow of the ship recoiled from a great 'berg we were approaching, and we fairly seemed to fly. The next moment the iceberg bowed its mighty head and went down, with a great surge and splash, some of its pinnacles striking the water scarcely a hundred yards astern.

The base came up from the depths of the sea, and the great mass sailed on its way.

We ran north ten miles, for we needed that much offing to weather the Cape, and then headed south-west by west. We were now going through the water at the rate of ten knots an hour, scattering the spray before us, while the bumping of small cakes of ice against our sides told us that the run was coming down rapidly.

It was a night of toil and danger, but when morning came we were close to the Cape, and as we looked seaward a cry burst from every lip, as our danger became apparent.

Two miles of blue sea were clear, but beyond that we saw the ice-field stretching away to the distant horizon, tossing under the rays of the rising sun. A vast white surface, broken and irregular, where great floes had been forced through the face of the field in various positions, coming down before the wind toward the point which we desired to pass, and we had yet some miles to go before we could clear it. Captain Lawton sprang up on the capstan and looked out, and then spoke to the men.

"Boys!" he cried, his clear voice ringing out like the blast of a trumpet, "you can see the danger as well as I. There is time yet for us to go about and make a winter harbor, before the field can strike us, but I think the chances about even whether we clear the Cape or not. As many as are in favor of taking the chances, hold up the right hand."

A cheer broke from the lips of the crew and every hand came up, and a smile was seen upon the face of the captain.

"You have voted as I wish, boys. Be brisk, Mr. Frazer: set the studding-sails and shake out every thing which will draw, for what we want is speed, now."

"Lay aloft, you sons of freedom!" cried

the first mate. "Jump! Away you go, now!"

The masts and yards were quickly black with moving forms, and the ship was dashing through the water with every sail set. We needed speed now, as the captain said. If we could pass through that rapidly-narrowing line of water, all would be well. If not—well, we must take the chances.

The *Sea Horse* was a fast ship; we trusted in her, and the stout vessel actually seemed to feel it. The slightest touch of the helm was obeyed, and we dashed into the opening between the ice and the Cape at a fearful speed, but, fast as we went, we could see the space of dark water narrowing foot by foot. There was no chance for retreat now, when we had once passed into the trap. There was no room for beating, and we could not get back against the wind in any other way. Captain Lawton maintained his position upon the capstan-head, watching the approach of the great field, but not a muscle in his stern face moved as he noted the fearful rapidity with which the ice was closing in. He gave his orders without a change in voice or attitude, and with his gallant conduct kept up the spirits of the men. But our danger was increasing at every moment. To clear the mile of passage which remained before we could reach the open sea while the ice-field passed over a quarter of the distance, was the problem. Although the speed of the ship was tremendous, yet to us she seemed to crawl, and but for the tell-tale log-line we should have said that we hardly moved, yet the tall masts were bending under the weight of the heavy sails, and it seemed as if the canvas would be torn from the bolt-ropes—yet they held!

Still the ice-field came on slowly, majestically, driving before it a frightened herd of seal. The rending of the ice by the force of the waves—the crash of falling icebergs—the barking of the seal—all mingled in strange confusion, and yet that narrow path to safety grew narrower still. Looking ahead, we saw the open sea, not three hundred yards away, but scarcely the ship's length between the field and the ice along the shore! Every man held his breath, for he knew that the moment of direct peril had come. The mate sprang into the chains and shouted his orders in a harsh, strained voice. The ice closed in; the prow of the ship had just passed into the open sea, when we felt her tremble through her oaken frame, and we were lifted bodily from the water, hung there a moment, and then shot forward as if launched from the ways into the tossing waves beyond!

We looked back, now that safety was assured, and saw that the passage through which we had come was utterly obliterated, and that the ice-field was already piling itself up on the shore in the utmost confusion. I have passed many hours of peril, but never one to equal the passage of the Cape.

Mrs. Higgins' Beans.

BY MATTIE DYER BRITTS.

Mrs. JOTHAM HIGGINS was a worthy little shopkeeper in a "delightful rural village," as a quoted from the village paper of Squawtown. If you are pretty familiar with the geography of backwoods Indiana, you will know at once where that is, and if you are not, you would have no better idea if I told you, so I won't enlarge on that point.

There was a Mrs. Jotham and five or six tow-headed little Jothams, and they lived in a good-sized frame-house on the edge of the village. Mrs. Jotham was described by her neighbors as "one of the stirrin'est, savin'est bodies you ever did see," and her premises were always as neat as wax. As for the little Jothams, they were like all other young ones, and needed an occasional switching; and for Mr. Jotham himself, he lived and moved and had his being principally in the little dingy store where he sold calico and tape, or exchanged parcels of sugar and coffee for the butter and eggs and onions of the farmers' wives who came to trade with him.

Sometimes Jotham made trades not altogether pleasing to Mrs. Jotham, who had no great opinion of her weaker-half's shrewdness, and on such occasions he was generally treated to a well-spiced bit of her mind, which he took with heroic patience.

Besides being a notable housekeeper, the good wife was also a notable gardener, and her garden always produced a supply of vegetables sufficient for their own use and for bestowal upon her less lucky neighbors.

But one season it so happened that Mrs. Jotham's beans did not do well. The vines bore it is true, but the kernels, instead of being plump, round, swelling beans ready to burst into juicy sweetness in the pot, were little, knotty, shriveled things, which seemed to grow tough instead of tender under boiling.

To put such beans on Mrs. Higgins' bountiful table was quite out of the question. And as there was a goodly amount of them, she couldn't bear to throw them away. So she tied them up in an old pillow tick, and stowed them away up garret, to be sold to the first peddler, or huckster, as they are called in that region, who came along. She knew he would give her a fair price for them, and then if any one chose to buy them of him, "why, that," said she, with a sharp eye to trade, "was their look-out, not her'n."

Then she told Jotham he must buy a lot of nice beans for their own use, and if any one came to the store with good beans to sell, he must be sure to get them, before anybody else could.

Jotham promised, like an obedient husband, as he was, and there the subject rested for the present.

The time for the fall round of the huckster soon drew near, and the smart farmers' wives saved their butter, eggs, poultry, and other farm produce, to exchange for his glass and tin ware, or to sell for ready cash.

Mrs. Higgins sometimes had a bountiful supply for the huckster, but on this occa-

sion she did not intend to let him have any thing except her eggs and her bag of beans.

One morning two little tow-heads came trotting in with the announcement that the huckster's wagon was at the door, and Mrs. Higgins, taking her basket of eggs and her bag of beans out to the front porch, went out to the wagon to arrange her barter.

The huckster agreed to take the beans, but he only wanted to give four cents a pound, and this small price Mrs. Higgins absolutely refused to take. Finally he offered, if she would take it in tin-ware, to give six cents. Now Mrs. Higgins did not need the tin-ware, having a plentiful supply already, but, rather than lose the extra two cents a pound, she consented, selected her tins, and the peddler drove off in triumph with the bag of beans.

In the due course of his peregrinations, the huckster stopped at the store of Jotham Higgins, where he had been wont to buy of Jotham a lot of unsalable goods, for small prices, and, in exchange, replenish Jotham's stock of tin and glassware.

Upon this occasion, Jotham, knowing that the huckster often got the best produce of the neighboring farms, bethought himself to inquire whether he had picked up any good, dry beans; adding that if he had, he (Jotham) would like to buy.

The keen peddler scented a chance for trade, so he complacently replied, "Well, yes, I *did* buy up one lot of prime good ones. Got 'em on a farm not very far from here. First-rate beans; give you my word for it. Sell 'em cheap, too!"

"What do you ask?" inquired honest Jotham.

"Ten cents a pound; prime lot o' beans at that."

"Strikes me that's rather high," said Jotham.

"Oh, no; not a bit! Give you my word for that, too. Medium quality sells every where for nine cents—couldn't think of letting a first-class article like them there beans go for less than ten."

"Well," said Jotham, reflectively, "a good price generally insures a good article. I'm in a hurry, to-day, so if you say your beans are good, hand 'em over, and I'll take all you've got."

"All right," and the trader produced his blue-ticking bag of beans. "Here they are, thirty-two pounds of mighty good beans. Open 'em and show 'em if you like 'em."

"I hain't got time now," said Jotham; "I've got customers waiting, and that bag's tied up pretty tight. I'll just weigh 'em and make it all right."

Jotham shouldered the bag of beans, carried them into the store, and weighed them; and having found the thirty pounds hold out good, paid the huckster three dollars, and allowed him to go on his way rejoicing.

When dinner-time came, Jotham shouldered his beans once more, and carried them safely home. Entering the house, he put down his burden and sought his wife, whom he found in the milk-house, skimming cream.

"Well, Mirandy, I've bought you a nice lot o' good beans," said he. "A man brought them in this morning, and I give him ten cents a pound for 'em."

"They ought to be pretty good for that price," said Mrs. Higgins. "Where air they?"

"In the house, on the table, in a bag," replied Jotham.

"Well, let's go look at 'em. I'm mighty particular about my beans."

So the husband and wife marched into the house. But at the first glance of the blue bag, Mrs. Jotham threw up her hands and cried out:

"Sakes 'o massy! Jotham Higgins, is them your beans?"

"Why, yes, of course," said Jotham, somewhat astonished.

"Well, who in the land's name *did* you get 'em of?" demanded the dame.

"Why, of the huckster," said John, hesitatingly, seeing that something was wrong, without knowing what.

"Well, I never des, an' panted Mrs. Jotham, sinking into a chair. "I never did see the like o' your tricks, Jotham Higgins!"

"What's the matter now?" asked Jotham.

"I'll tell you what's the matter! I sold that very lot o' beans in that there very same sack to that there very same huckster this blessed morning, for six cents a pound! And you've bought 'em back, you have, for ten cents!" Now ain't that a smart caper, Jotham Higgins?"

Poor Jotham saw that he had been sold, as well as the beans, and he resolved to keep quiet about it. But Mrs. H. was much too indignant to keep the story to herself, so before night it was all over town. And it was a long time before he heard the last of his bean-trade with the huckster.

Beat Time's Notes.

THE wine-cups and then the hic-cups.

THEY have pocket editions of every thing down to a pocket edition of a flask.

WISHING for any object is called longing, because it is always a long time coming.

ABOUT the only people who can claim to be high-strung are those who are hanged.

WHY do they crack jokes when sound ones are better?

BROWN received no invitation to Smith's last party, and says he stayed away for spite.

A YOUNG man said of his girl, who had often refused to marry him, that "she was the most no-ing girl he ever knew."

JINX's wife has a new double-set of false teeth, and he says there is now a great deal of re-jaws-ing in his house.

AN inventor of a patent medicine says that a little of it rubbed on the top of a grave resurrected the occupant, but he doesn't say whether it paid for the rent or not.

ONE editor endeavored to be complimentary when he said of another "that what he lacked in wisdom he made up in ignorance."

WE are always ready to give consolation to an unfortunate neighbor—and are glad of the opportunity.

IN slippery weather I always walk in the middle of the street and not on the sidewalk, because when I fall I always spread out and need plenty of room.